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THE NATION

FEBRUARY 21, 1972 *50 cents*

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Table in Peking

HISTORY WRITES THE AGENDA

Melvin Gurtov

Pan American Highway

RUNNING A DREAM THROUGH A SWAMP

Roger E. Soles

Russia's Military Burden

SOVIET ARMS IN THE PENTAGON MIRROR

Louvan E. Nolting

●

***David Greene / Francis Stuart's* Black List, Section H**

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LETTERS

breakfast news

Baltimore, Md.

DEAR SIRS: A breakfast cereal, not included in Robert B. Choate's "Refrigerator Roulette: The Sugar-Coated Children's Hour " [*The Nation,* Jan. 31] that is making it big on TV commercials aimed at children is General Mills's Buc Wheats ("Helps you feel like a million bucks!"). Choate speaks of a "tidal wave of nutrition miseducation." That is too tame a description of the sales pitch being employed to sell this cereal.

Pictured on the Buc Wheats box, and on TV as well, is a bowl of the cereal, adjacent to which is a breakfast of bacon, egg, orange juice and toast. The headline says, "Compare these two ways to start the day: *(1)* Buc Wheats . . . a 1 oz. serving with milk VERSUS *(2)* Bacon & Egg Breakfast with toast and a 4 oz. glass of orange juice. Compared to this bacon and egg breakfast, Buc Wheats is the only cereal with milk that has: 50 per cent of the protein, more vitamins, more minerals, only 52 per cent of the calories." While the bowl of cereal on the box is shown topped with strawberries, the nutritional qualities of this fruit are not included in the printed claims.

If any nutrient needed by humans can be considered the most important, it is protein. If there is any meal of the day in which protein is especially important, it is breakfast. Studies made on subjects who have eaten various breakfasts show that, without a good amount of protein, available energy drops off rapidly, within an hour or so.

The bacon, egg, toast and orange juice breakfast offers 15.2 grams of protein (General Mills's figure of 14.3 on the side of the box would appear to be an understatement). This amount of protein is a fine breakfast for kids anywhere up to 12 or 14 years of age. The amount of protein in Buc Wheats *with milk* is 7.2 grams, less than one-half that needed for a good breakfast for children. The vitamin and minerals that may be present in the cereal cannot be considered a compensation for the lost protein. A good meal must have vitamins, minerals, and protein—not one or another. In addition, fortifying foods with 100 per cent of the minimum daily requirements of vitamins is a ruse; the body cannot utilize them efficiently in that quantity. In sum, General Mills is inviting the public to believe that a bad breakfast is good and a good breakfast is inadequate. If that is not a tidal wave of nutritional miseducation, I don't know what is. . . .

Herman M. Heyn

addict

Lucerne Valley, Calif.

DEAR SIRS:

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
I WILL do the *Nation* crossword,
Sans dictionary, sans thesaurus,
Sans encyclopedia, sans other goodies,
Or go down
To the vile dust from whence I sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.

Hope Hanes

pen friends

DEAR SIRS: I am an 18 years old Guyanese girl of East Indian descent. I live at the address below. I would like to correspond with pen-friends from U.S.A., Canada and England. They must be in the age ranging from 18-25, and I trust that through your column I will keep in contact with these friends.

Mangaldai Roopnarine
493 Forbes Street
Enterprise, East Coast Demerara
Guyana, S.A.

EDITORIALS

'No One Can Prove It'

The Indochinese war goes on, and the Administration now knows that, barring acts of God, Mr. Nixon must enter the November elections with that albatross around his neck. His colleagues would do almost anything to get him out of a politically awkward, even desperate, situation—everything except the one thing that would end the war. It will not "overthrow"—i.e., withdraw support from—the Thieu regime.

To withdraw support from Thieu, who should never have received it in the first place, would in the words of Stewart Alsop (*Newsweek*), be "an act of crass betrayal, the crowning tragedy of a tragic war, and a long farewell to all our greatness." Nixon and his aides agree.

Another current Administration argument, one which goes beyond terminology, is the enemy's motivation in breaking off the secret talks in November 1971. This point is of some consequence in the interplay of the enemy's strategy and ours, but the main issue is the subsequent Nixon-Kissinger political maneuvering on the home front. Mr. Kissinger, in an unpublicized, later thoroughly publicized, meeting with relatives of American prisoners of war (some of the wives give signs of becoming politically active), suggested that the North Vietnamese might have been influenced by the Cooper-Church amendment, which passed the Senate on October 28, and the Senate vote of October 29, cutting off all foreign aid. Of course, the Senate soon reconsidered, but Kissinger thinks, or says he thinks, that Hanoi decided the Thieu regime was on the verge of being jettisoned by the Senate, so why negotiate with the Executive? "No one can prove it, of course," Stewart Alsop writes, "but it is an article of faith in the White House that these votes queered the negotiations." He could have added that no one can disprove it either, which may explain why the White House relies on it as a rationale.

Realizing that his "plan to end the war" is not working as he thought it would, Nixon is getting ugly. His handymen are slapping down the critics with increasing harshness. First Muskie got it, when he offered a simple, practical way out. Within hours, Ronald Ziegler told the press that Muskie's speech "cannot help but complicate the progress of negotiations"—i.e., the critics had better shut up. When Muskie and other Democrats continued talking, H. R. Haldeman, in his first TV stint as Nixon's "chief of staff," declared that, after he revealed the secret negotiations, the only conclusion Mr. Nixon could draw was that the critics "are consciously aiding and abetting the enemy of the United States."

This wording practically accuses the critics of treason, and Nixon apparently thought it might backfire, so Ziegler was once more thrown into the breach. Haldeman was only stating his own views. The President "expects honest criticism and . . . expects there will be debate on overriding issues." But, Ziegler added, "when public figures are critical of Administration policies, they should look carefully at what they are saying."

Secretary Rogers was another who rebuked Muskie,

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in between Ziegler's two pronouncements. This was something of a surprise. Nobody takes Ziegler too seriously: he is only a mouthpiece; but Rogers is a Cabinet officer. Such personages customarily stay out of the more acrimonious exchanges of partisan politics, but not under the Nixon dispensation.

The new hard line of the Nixon Administration would indicate that some stormy political weather lies ahead.

Give Politics a Chance

William P. Rogers, who holds the title if not the powers of Secretary of State, has told the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland that "it would be inappropriate and counterproductive" for this country to intervene in Northern Ireland because the crisis there "must be resolved by the people of that area." As in Vietnam, no doubt. What Rogers, Kissinger and Nixon seem unable to recognize is that the time has long since passed when military solutions should be sought for what are basically political problems. In an eloquent sermon at St. Patrick's in New York, the Rev. Robert I. Gannon reaffirmed an old truth which has been greatly strengthened by the force of world opinion in our time: "Only stupid soldiers and stupid politicians could attempt the pacification of a country in 1972 by imprisonment without trial, by torture of prisoners for information and by the hysterical shooting of unarmed civilians who dared to march in their own ghetto when the soldiers said not to march."

Precisely because, as he points out, "British bungling has made matters worse," we should do what we can to help the British extricate themselves from a situation which is not wholly unlike that in which we find ourselves in Vietnam. Surely the Administration can make known to Mr. Heath the concern which the American people feel about what is happening in Northern Ireland. Communication of this concern, at the highest level, would be both appropriate and productive, to turn Mr. Rogers' proposition upside down. American pressure is precisely what is needed; there should be more of it. Slowly, belatedly, opinion is mounting here and people are finding ways to express their concern. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, which seeks a political settlement through nonviolent means, could not carry on were it not for the help it is receiving from people in this country. One difficulty is that the American public is not well briefed by the media on what individuals and organizations have said and done. For example, the Irish *Times* recently quoted George Meany to the effect that civilization is being menaced "by dictatorial decrees permitting the detention of Irishmen without trial," a statement which suggests that the labor movement might be moved to organize support for a political settlement in Northern Ireland.

Senate Resolution 180, introduced by Senators Ribicoff and Kennedy, outlines the preconditions for a political settlement: (*1*) termination of the internment policy; (*2*) full respect for civil rights; (*3*) implementation of the reforms which have been promised many times; (*4*) dissolution of the so-called Parliament of Northern Ireland; (*5*) withdrawal of all British forces; and (*6*)

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The Nation is published weekly (except biweekly in July and August) by the Nation Company and copyright 1972 in the U.S.A. by the Nation Associates, Inc., 333 Sixth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10014. Tel: CH 2-8400. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y.

Subscription Price: One year $12.50; two years, $23. Add $1 per year postage for Canada and Mexico; $2 other foreign.

Change of Address: It is essential that subscribers ordering a change of address give five weeks' notice and provide their old as well as their new address. Please give Zip Code numbers for both addresses.

Manuscripts. All work submitted will be read by the editors. The magazine cannot, however, be responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.

Information to Libraries: The Nation is indexed in Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, Book Review Digest, Book Review Index and the Public Affairs Information Service.

THE NATION

Volume 214
No. 8

The Sherrod Library
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Johnson City, Tennessee
FEB 18 '72

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convening of all interested parties for the purpose of achieving the unification of Ireland. To induce Protestant participation, assurances should be given of the type discussed by—of all people—the Rev. Ian Paisley in a recent interview. He called for a scrapping of "the sectarian constitution" of the Republic, and assurances that the Catholic hierarchy will not have "an improper influence on political affairs"—in essence, full civil rights including a specific guarantee of freedom of religion. What must be emphasized is that only a political settlement can end the strife in Northern Ireland. The reason such a settlement has never been achieved is, as John Graham pointed out in a recent issue of *The Spectator*, that "politics have never been given a chance."

Pressure of American opinion can provide the spur to the negotiations that must take place and these negotiations must now center on unification without which no lasting settlement is possible. Of course, if we offer our good offices, Vietnam will be thrown in our faces. But the fact that most Americans now concede—if the Administration does not—that military intervention in Vietnam was a mistake, is an added reason for urging the British to give politics a chance.

Where to Get the Money

This is the season of the tax bite: the April deadline approaches. Congress is back in session, and the President will probably be proposing a brand-new dodge, the Value Added Tax or, as it is known among acronym fans, VAT. Of course, VAT is nothing but a superduper sales tax, which is added in increments in the fabrication of, say, glass and metal and wire into a TV picture tube, and thence into a TV receiver. It shifts burdens from the rich to the middle class and from the middle class to those least able to pay. Ethically it may be a monstrosity, but it has one great value—it is almost impossible to avoid, unless you are in a position to stop buying altogether, a condition which a substantial part of our population is already approaching. (On February 7 the Senate approved a bill to provide one hot meal a day, at least five days a week, for undernourished "senior citizens.")

Actually, it is not so much new tax measures that we need as a tax system which is just that, and not a tax giveaway. The existing federal income tax is a prime example of the latter. It produces revenue; all who pay it know that. What they don't know, or what enough of them don't know, is that the income tax system is a dodger's delight.

It got into that condition by granting tax deductions and allowances for all sorts of things, some desirable in themselves, some calculated to distort the basic income tax principle for the benefit of special interests. In his statement of January 14, 1972, before the subcommittee on priorities and economy in government of the Joint Economic Committee, Stanley S. Surrey described the present income tax as being "replete with tax subsidy provisions." New subsidies are constantly added: the 1971 Act produced restoration of the 7 per cent investment credit; a provision for accelerated depreciation of machinery and equipment; preferential treatment of income derived from exporting; five-year amortization for the construction of facilities for on-the-job training programs and child-care facilities and many others. These are on top of such runarounds as the oil depletion allowance, which frees many oil magnates from income tax payments altogether.

Surrey, formerly with the Treasury, estimates the giveaways at $60 billion annually. Senator Proxmire estimates at least $63 billion during fiscal 1970. Philip Stern, another authority in this field, puts it at about $71 billion. *Fortune* writes editorially, "Subsidies have become so pervasive in the U. S. economy that we are approaching a point of absurdity in which everybody is subsidizing everybody else."

It is a vicious setup for a lot of reasons. (*1*) It creates vested interests which make it well-nigh impossible to eliminate a tax subsidy, once it has been granted; (*2*) it is the worst way to fund a program, since the merits are rarely discussed. The subsidized causes may in some cases be entirely worthy, but that is not the right way to support them; (*3*) the erosion has sneaked up on us, with none of the grants receiving a great deal of attention, until now the whole system has been undermined and is due for a thorough overhauling. This, of course, requires not only hard work but Congressional courage of a high order.

The goal, however, is one of utmost importance. If we had an honest tax system—a revenue-collecting, not a revenue-collecting *and* distributing mechanism, by all indications the fiscal outlook would improve.

The Wallace Factor

Among the uncertainties that beset this year's election the George Wallace factor looms large. With so many Democratic contenders, Wallace should do well in the Florida primary. In 1968 he polled roughly 624,000 votes in that state to Nixon's 886,000, and Humphrey's 676,000. But regardless of the Florida outcome, he is unlikely to exert a significant influence at the Democratic convention. Should the Democratic nominee, whoever he may be, want a Southerner on the ticket, someone like Governor Askew or Sen. Ernest Hollings would be tapped, not Wallace. But if Wallace should run as an independent, after making as much trouble as possible for the Democrats at the convention, then he would help them in a significant way because he could well carry three or four Southern states that might otherwise go to Nixon. On the other hand, if he decides not to run as an independent, the way will be open for Nixon to apply the Southern strategy by artful exploitation of the "anti-bussing" issue. In areas outside the South, however, the absence of Wallace as an independent candidate might well assist the Democrats.

A first impression would suggest that Wallace is more likely than not to run as an independent candidate. He has the money; he has the organization; he loves to campaign. And he has always said that he lives for the day when he can force the major party nominees to bargain with him in the electoral college. But despite these and other considerations, Wallace may decide to stay home. To Stewart Alsop he scornfully dismissed the suggestion that he might have an understanding with Nixon (*Newsweek*, February 7): "What would be in it for me?" he asked. It doesn't require much imagination to come up

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with possible answers to that question. Even so, if he decides not to run as an independent it may well be for specific political reasons of his own.

For one thing, Nixon has to some extent pre-empted a portion of the Wallace constituency in the South by his ambiguous position on bussing. Moreover, blatant, belligerent opposition is no longer the accepted way to preserve the racial *status quo* in the South; a degree of sophistication is now thought indispensable. And Wallace has lost some of his "blue-collar" support, in the South as elsewhere. It is one thing to express "social" resentments by voting for a maverick in a time of full employment; the gesture is less tempting when jobs are scarce.

Another consideration may also cause Wallace to hesitate about running. It is just possible that this year the Democrats might carry some of the Southern states which they lost to Nixon in 1968, even if Wallace were the third man in the race. For him, that would be the ultimate humiliation. It is worth noting that Wallace failed recently to induce the Alabama legislature to pass a primary law which would have allowed the winner to name his own delegates. He can still call the legislature back into special session and seek passage of this bill, but is is not expected to do so. In the absence of such legislation—Alabama has no primary—the delegates would be uncommitted. To some extent, therefore, the chances and the strategies of both parties will be influenced by what Wallace decides to do after the excitement at Miami.

Off the Highway

American tourists abroad, observing the hysterical zeal with which the Europeans are ensnaring their countries in super highways and ripping out the hearts of their cities to provide speedways and parking space for automobiles, shake their heads and wonder why the Old World cannot learn from the obvious mistakes of the New. They would do well to ask why the New World is so slow to learn from, and correct, its own mistakes.

At this moment, the United States is committed to spend $112 million to build the last link of the Pan American Highway through 255 miles of "the wettest rain forests and one of the largest swamps in the Western Hemisphere" (see "Running a Dream Through a Swamp" by Roger E. Soles, p. 233). Meanwhile, mass transit in the United States itself is dying because road building is as rich a pork barrel as this nation ever devised, and because the "concrete lobby" can terrorize the staunchest legislator (see "Up Against the Concrete Wall" by G. C. Thelen, Jr., p. 237). Walter Cronkite, speaking recently over CBS Radio, pointed out that in cities of more than 50,000 population, 96 per cent of all daily passenger trips are now made by private car. On the other hand, riders on urban transit systems have dropped from 10.5 billion before World War II to 6.5 billion today, although the population rose by 50 per cent in that period, and the bulk of it in the urban clusters.

The situation is not entirely stagnant. Some cities have been saved at the last minute from the lobotomies of freeways; the Highway Trust Fund, that self-perpetuating gravy dish (road taxes for more roads for more cars for more taxes for more roads) has been breached and some of its wealth will go to other transit needs. Even the Ford Motor Co. and Mobil Oil have come out in support of mass transport and for some check on the heedless proliferation of roads and cars. But where it exists, the enlightened self-interest of the concrete lobby goes no further than to advocate bus traffic instead of car traffic. The resuscitation of rail transit, which is the key factor in solving the *mass* movement of people into and within the urban centers, still languishes. Rail transit needs long planning—decisions taken today may not be felt for a decade or more—but if the planning is not done now, the decline of rail, both intercity and municipal, will soon be irreversible.

Rail transit is gaining friends every day; however, the question is whether they will enlist fast enough and prove strong enough to break the arrogant greed of the legions who supply steel and gas and concrete and rubber and hamburgers to "America on wheels."

Taxes and the Campaign

When Congress failed to implement the proposal to allow every taxpayer a $1 checkoff on his federal income tax return as a political contribution, many civic-minded persons concluded that all hope of equalizing campaign spending by the two major parties in this year's election was gone. It isn't so. A provision in Public Law 92-178, passed by the 92nd Congress, contains a section which deals constructively with campaign contributions: Title VII, "Tax Incentives for Contributions to Candidates for Public Office." Under this provision an individual may claim a credit against income tax equal to one-half of all political contributions made during the tax year, up to a maximum of $12.50 for a single person, or a married person filing a separate return. A husband and wife filing a joint return are entitled to a maximum credit of $25. In lieu of the tax credit, a taxpayer can deduct from income the amount of political contributions made during the year up to a limit of $100 for a married couple filing a joint return, and $50 for those filing individual returns.

This title is exceedingly broad. The political contribution can be made to a candidate for election to a federal, state or local office, in a primary, general, or special election, or it can be made to a political committee. The restrictions are few and of no particular consequence, such as that the candidate must meet the qualifications for the office to which he aspires: e.g., since no one can serve as President of the United States until he has reached the age of 35, a contribution to a less mature candidate for that office (there are some) would not be valid. Also, the act applies only to political contributions made after December 31, 1971; but that takes in the general election of 1972 and the primaries.

Title VII has been given so little publicity that probably the great majority of taxpayers are unaware of its provisions. Treasurer Robert S. Strauss of the Democratic National Committee is planning to enlighten them by means of full-page ads in some ten cities in early February. The national committee is managing to pay its current bills and has the funds for the ad campaign, but it is staggering under a 1968 debt of $9.3 million. Title VII affords a means of liquidating the debt and starting anew.

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TABLE IN PEKING

HISTORY WRITES THE AGENDA

MELVIN GURTOV
Mr. Gurtov, an associate professor of political science at the University of California at Riverside, is a member of the Committee for a New China Policy. His China and Southeast Asia: The Politics of Survival *was published recently by D. C. Heath.*

Immediately after President Nixon announced his intention to visit the People's Republic of China, speculation in the press and on both sides of the political aisle was to the effect that a "settlement" of the Indochinese war might finally be possible. The prevailing assumption was that the Chinese leadership, eager to effect a thaw in Sino-American relations, would be prepared to exert influence on North Vietnam in order to bring its bargaining position closer to that of the United States. The reasoning was strikingly similar to that of the 1960s, which presumed that the Soviet Union was willing and able to coerce Hanoi's leaders into concluding a Vietnamese settlement largely on U.S. terms. In the more recent instance, however, the Administration sought to quash undue optimism, and with good reason. Neither at the time of the Nixon announcement nor since has the People's Republic diminished its support of North Vietnam's Indochinese policies. In the same period, the Administration has made clear its lack of interest in a negotiated settlement—except, of course, on terms that would amount to Hanoi's acceptance of a military victory for the Saigon regime and the rightist governments in Laos and Cambodia.

To estimate the strength of China's commitment to the success of the Vietnamese Communist revolution requires a brief summary of Chinese interests and activities in Indochina. Revolution and intervention in Vietnam have preoccupied the Chinese Government since the triumph of Mao's revolution in 1949. Chinese military assistance contributed to the successful struggle of the Vietminh against the French that concluded, only temporarily, at the 1954 Geneva Conference. Upon the breakdown of the Geneva Agreements in South Vietnam and Laos, China gave the National Liberation Front and the Pathet Lao verbal and limited material support. In Cambodia, where indigenous leadership was popular and effective, China applauded Prince Sihanouk's neutralist foreign policy. Today, Chinese policy still rests on giving aid to North Vietnam for the Indochinese revolutions, although now the war has fully engulfed Cambodia too, and Chinese assistance is more substantial than it was in the 1950s and early 1960s. Between 1965 and mid-1971, total Chinese aid to Hanoi was more than $2 billion—not up to the level of the Soviet Union's approximately $3 billion, but enough to counterbalance it, meet Vietnamese economic and military needs, and demonstrate China's backing of North Vietnam's primary objective to reunify the country.

Such consistent support stems primarily from the Chinese leadership's long-standing belief that the military involvement of the United States in Indochina—and Thailand as well—is not only an unjust interference in the revolutionary struggles of the peoples of the area but also a threat, actual or potential, to China's own security. This twofold challenge to China's revolutionary and national interests, it is held, requires that—within the limits of its capabilities, its determination to deny the United States a pretext for carrying the war into China, and its insistence that revolutionary forces rely primarily on their own organizational and material resources—China should encourage and assist North Vietnam and allied Communist movements to evict the United States from Indochina.

In seeking to deny and erode American—and, one may add, Soviet—positions of military, political and economic strength in Indochina, China thus looks first to its own long-term interests. Certainly, its leaders would prefer that pro-Communist regimes be established throughout Indochina. But, to judge from Chinese policy toward Sihanouk's Cambodia and nearby Burma, the leadership is quite prepared to put state interests before revolutionary ones and to have friendly, mutually profitable relations with non-Communist governments that are neutral in word and deed. No Chinese Government can accept the legitimacy of the present Cambodian or Laotian Government, not to mention that of South Vietnam, simply because they have all compromised their independence by permitting the United States to intervene, in the air and on the ground, in their internal affairs. When Chou En-lai, at the 1954 Geneva Conference, induced the Vietminh to accept the division of Vietnam and recognize the legitimacy of the pro-Western governments in Laos and Cambodia, he had been led to believe that the arrangements would neutralize Indochina, prevent the establishment of American bases there, and thus end Western intervention. The transformation of Indochina into an American military outpost on China's southern frontier, with two and then three governments eager to have American military forces fighting on their soil, hardly constitutes the kind of neutralization Chou expected.

American policy has consistently ignored or underestimated China's interests in Indochina, and the concern of its leadership about U.S. overt and covert activities in support of client regimes there. It is as though Sino-American relations and U.S. actions in Indochina were independent spheres of policy, the latter bearing only superficially on the former. Since 1950, when the United States recognized the Bao Dai regime in Vietnam, and then extended aid to its French masters upon the outbreak of fighting in Korea, American administrations have clung to this contradiction. On the one hand, every American President and Secretary of State since then has voiced the desire for friendly relations with China—usually with the proviso that China's leaders should first abandon their hostile policies. On the other hand, those same officials have also sought to justify U.S. intervention in Indochina as necessary to contain Chinese influence, to compel a moderation of its allegedly hegemonial ambitions, and to promote what we now (however tenuously) finally have:

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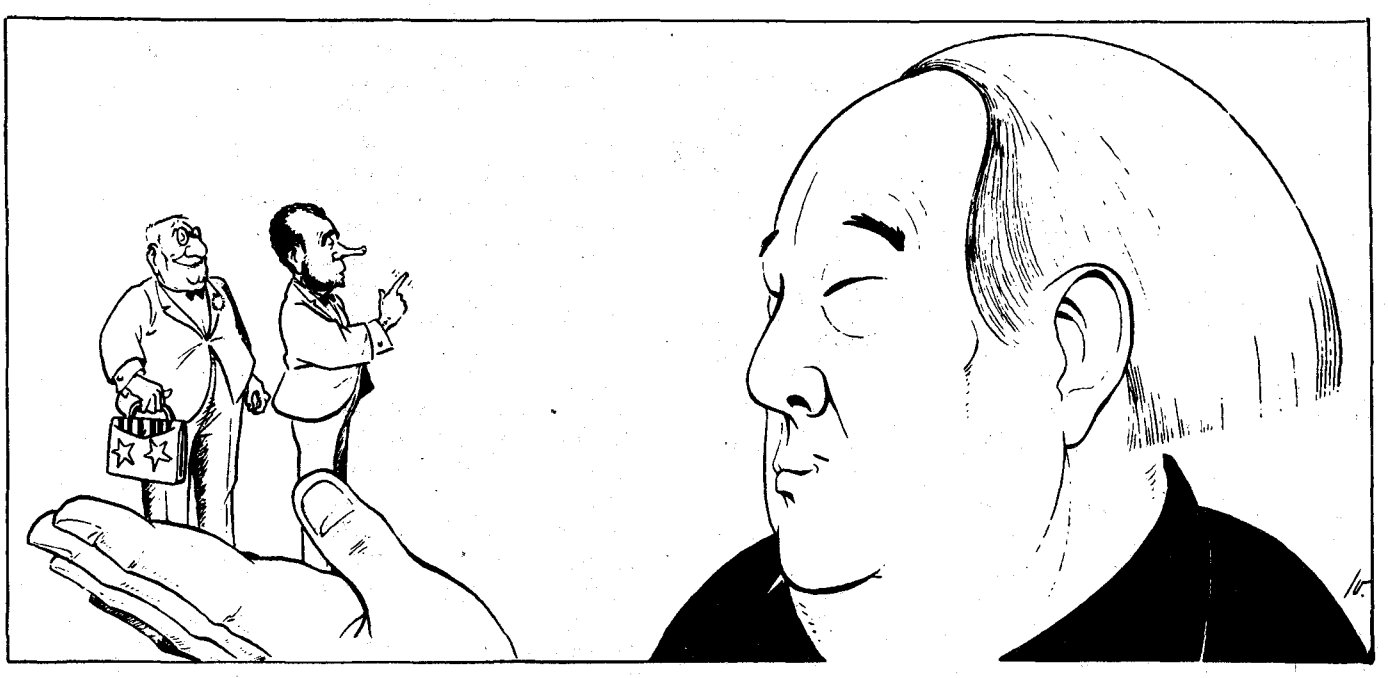
a non-Communist regime for each Indochinese state—politically and militarily weak and ineffectual, to be sure, but non-Communist.

It should surprise no one that, consistently in the last twenty-odd years, the containment policy has run far ahead of, and thus undercut, the avowed policy of *rapprochement*. In the Vietnamese fighting, the contradictions were manifest in the sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam begun in 1965—a campaign whose implications for China's security were not likely to be taken less seriously in Peking merely because American officials publicly and privately avowed that the United States did not want war with China. In Laos, since at least 1964, the United States has financed and directed tactical air support and "reconnaissance" missions, flown by Chinese Nationalist and Thai pilots; has authorized the CIA-run Air America to play a major role in the air war, and has allowed the Taiwan-based subsidiary of Air America, Air Asia, to service combat aircraft engaged in operations over Laos. The United States has also underwritten the costs to Thailand of sending several thousand so-called volunteers to fight in the Laos ground war. And it was reliably reported early in 1971 that armed Laotian reconnaissance teams had for some time been dispatched from a CIA outpost to penetrate as far as 200 miles into China on intelligence missions. None of this can be reasonably interpreted as demonstrating U.S. friendship toward China, much less as falling within the scope of the Geneva Agreements. Only by taking such activities into account can one begin to understand why China materially assists the North Vietnamese-Pathet Lao effort in Laos, why it maintains a road network across northern Laos (which, it must be added, was begun and expanded with the approval of two Lao Premiers), and why those roads are fortified by antiaircraft artillery, radar and several thousand troops.

The Nixon Administration's initiatives toward China, coupled with the reduction of U.S. ground combat strength in South Vietnam, give the appearance of ending the American provocations of China that have been a byproduct of our involvement in Indochina. But the President's views seem to conform closely to those of previous administrations, namely, that China can be a force for peace in Asia, and a Sino-American dialogue can be undertaken only when its leaders are made aware that American military power stands behind the non-Communist nations of Asia. As Mr. Nixon wrote in the October 1967 *Foreign Affairs*:

> The primary restraint on China's Asian ambitions should be exercised by the Asian nations in the path of those ambitions, backed by the ultimate power of the United States. . . . Only as the nations of non-Communist Asia become so strong . . . that they no longer furnish tempting targets for Chinese aggression, will the leaders in Peking be persuaded to turn their energies inward rather than outward. And that will be the time when the dialog with mainland China can begin.
>
> For the short run, then, this means a policy of firm restraint, of no reward, of a creative counterpressure designed to persuade Peking that its interests can be served only by accepting the basic rules of international civility . . . . We need a positive policy of pressure and persuasion, of dynamic detoxification, a marshaling of Asian forces both to keep the peace and to help draw off the poison from the Thoughts of Mao.

The President's game plan for China, which in that article he likened to dealing with the "destructive forces" in American ghettos, makes plain why Chinese leaders continue to insist that the Indochinese war is a critical obstacle to Sino-American understanding. In his interview with James Reston of *The New York Times* last August, Premier Chou reiterated what he had told a delegation of American students: "At present the most urgent question [in Sino-American relations] is still Vietnam." Before a visiting Vietnamese Government and party delegation, Chou was emphatic: "Chairman Mao has taught us: If anyone among us should say that we should not help the Vietnamese people in their struggle against U.S. aggression and for national salvation, that will be betrayal, betrayal of the revolution."



Vadillo Siempre (Mexico)

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In keeping with this attitude, China has renewed its economic and military aid agreements with North Vietnam, voiced support for the seven-point program put forward by the NLF in Paris, and commended the proposals of the Pathet Lao that entail, among other things, a cease-fire (meaning the cessation of all ground and air activity over Laos) in order to begin negotiations between the contending Laotian factions. At the same time, China leaves it to the North Vietnamese to decide whether, when, and with what format a new international conference on Indochina should be held. Peking is not going to help the United States pull its chestnuts out of Vietnam.

Why have current American policies in Indochina not persuaded the Chinese that the United States has modified its long-standing objectives? Peking's leaders have expressed the conviction that only the tactics of the United States, not the strategy, have changed. Despite the U.S. troop withdrawals, Chou told Reston:

> In March last year, the peaceful rule of Norodom Sihanouk in Cambodia was subverted, and then the U.S. troops went in. Even your *New York Times* criticized that action. And then this year there was the attack on Route 9 [the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos]. Isn't that an expansion of the war? And so that has brought about even greater harm to the Vietnamese people and the Indochinese people as a whole . . . . Just a look there and you can see that. Shouldn't we sympathize with them?

To Peking, the President was absurd when he tried to explain the Cambodia intervention as a brief tactical foray across an international boundary. Until then, in fact up until May 5, as is not generally known, the Chinese embassy in Phnom Penh had expressed to Lon Nol a willingness to work with his new regime (even while Sihanouk was in Peking!), provided Cambodia retained its neutralist foreign policy and continued to accept the tactical need of Vietnamese Communist troops to use the border sanctuaries. Only well after the "incursions" into Cambodia had begun, and when it had become obvious that Lon Nol had thrown in his lot with the Americans and Saigon, did China throw support to the exile regime of Sihanouk.

The Laos intervention of early 1971 was accompanied by the usual American assurances that, in the President's words, the operation "is not directed against" China, with which the United States was still interested in having friendly relations. But to the Chinese, such statements could have been regarded only as typical American duplicity: vowing friendship toward China while providing extensive air and logistical support for a South Vietnamese drive into southern Laos, and thus posing a direct challenge to Chinese interests in that country. This was the more evident because, in the same period, many additional Thai soldiers entered the Laos fighting (airlifted and financed by the United States), U.S. helicopter gunships for the first time became engaged there, and B-52 bombers were operating over northern Laos (a fact denied by the Administration, although a special Senate Foreign Relations Committee report discovered it had been going on since February 1970). Apparently hoping to strengthen its case, Administration spokesmen charged that Chinese antiaircraft positions and military personnel in northern Laos had markedly increased beginning in 1970. And they expressed alarm at the progress in Chinese road building toward the Laos border with Thailand. What these spokesmen neglected to mention was that the Chinese buildup in Laos came after the start of the B-52 raids in the north and at least two attacks on the roads (which are off-limits to American pilots) by U.S.-supplied Lao T-28 fighter-bombers. They also failed to say that the main reasons for the road building in northwest Laos probably are that China wants, first, to stake out a protective buffer zone in the face of heavy U.S. involvement and, second, to keep the Thai Government mindful of the potential for more active Chinese support of insurgency in Thailand, as long as Thailand continues to intervene in Laos.

Finally, the Chinese Government must remain concerned —and, to judge from its statements, is concerned—about the continued bombing of North Vietnam, now labeled "protective reaction" instead of "graduated escalation." In 1971, according to Pentagon statistics (which are far lower than the claims of Hanoi), more than 100 such missions (involving up to 400 aircraft) were flown against military and industrial targets in the north, some of them within 80 miles of Hanoi. These raids, in violation of the territorial sovereignty of a Socialist ally, compel Chinese officials to give less weight to the American talk of friendship than to the thinly veiled threats of President Nixon—"I am not going to place any limitation upon the use of air power [in Indochina], except, of course . . . tactical nuclear weapons" (February 17, 1971)—and of Secretary of State Rogers—"We do not rule out the use of air power to support Asians in any effort they make to fight the common enemy. There is one enemy; it is North Vietnam" (January 29, 1971).

In summary, Chinese leaders, not only in the 1950s and 1960s but today as well, are acutely sensitive to the machinations of the United States in Indochina. They are no more ready now than before to sacrifice their interests in Indochina on behalf of Sino-American harmony. (Indeed, even if they wished to do so, they are surely aware that the Russians would take full advantage of China's sudden about-face, and that North Vietnam's determination to continue the war would probably not be diminished by Chinese pressure on Hanoi to desist.) Meanwhile, the United States continues to attach greater importance to the survival of non-Communist authoritarian regimes in Indochina than to the establishment of conditions for a genuine Sino-American détente in Southeast Asia. This priority inhibits communications as much as it undermines what progress the Administration's China policies have achieved. Such was the case, for instance, when the invasion of Cambodia was launched: only three days before, Peking had announced its readiness to reopen the Warsaw ambassadorial talks. After the invasion, China called off the talks, and they have not yet been resumed. Conceivably, the Nixon visit might yield agreement to a new round of talks, perhaps in Asia or New York. In any event, we should be clear that no Indochinese settlement, total or partial, political or military, will come about because of Sino-American meetings. Peking will not, and indeed cannot, bargain in behalf of its Vietnamese allies.

What we can hope, and have a right to expect, is that Indochina will be removed as an obstacle to Sino-American relations. Along with the rest of Southeast Asia,

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Indochina must become what Elliott Richardson has called a "sphere of restraint" for the two powers. The United States, which for more than twenty years has projected its power and influence into this area so distant from us, yet so close to China, must take the lead in the creation of such a sphere. Washington must begin by recognizing that the containment and monitoring of China through Indochina is neither feasible nor desirable—in fact, does not even make sense—and that history, geography and political realities argue against a strategy that relies on air power, technology and covert operations to stabilize the complex sociopolitical map of Southeast Asia.

Such a reordering of priorities—to use the current phrase—must lead to the complete and rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces and bases from South Vietnam, the termination of air operations over North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and the liquidation of CIA activities throughout the area. Only against the background of decisions such as these—only when the United States indicates that it will no longer make Indochina a contesting ground for the major powers—are the contending forces in each country of Indochina likely to move toward a resolution of their differences by political accommodations. And it is then also that direct discussions between Chinese and American representatives can proceed from a basis of mutual confidence. □

PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY

Running a Dream Through a Swamp

ROGER E. SOLES

Mr. Soles is doing graduate studies in agricultural economics at the Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin. He has lived for four years in Colombia, two of them as a Peace Corps volunteer, and two as a research intern for the Midwestern Universities Consortium for International Activities.

Last May, representatives of the United States, Colombia and Panama signed an agreement to close the "Darien Gap" of the Pan American Highway. When this final link is completed, presumably within the next ten years, cars and trucks will be able to drive from Alaska to Chile. The cost of this last segment has been estimated at $168.7 million and the United States is committed to pay two-thirds of it. It will cost that enormous sum because the 255-mile stretch from Tocumen, Panama, to Guapa Colombia, will run through the wettest rain forests and one of the largest swamps in the Western Hemisphere.

Thus far, only one small contract has been let—for about $16 million, but contracts for major portions of the road are due to be let out next month. Last spring, Mr. Nixon welcomed this development "with greatest enthusiasm." He saw it as "a historic milestone along the road to understanding and unity within our hemisphere. . . ."

Rhetoric aside, documents relating to this project reveal that little consideration has been given to alternative locations—except for an even longer and more costly route through Colombia's western rain forest regions—and that the approved plans have not been submitted to rigorous cost benefit analysis. Ecological and environmental factors have apparently never been considered; at least neither of these subjects has been discussed. The acceptance of the official route is the more remarkable because an alternative does exist; it would locate the road in a less humid area, aid the tourist trade of the region, bring ground transportation to more cities, require less maintenance, cause less damage to the environment, and be considerably less expensive.

The reasons for preferring the expensive route are shrouded in mystery, but it has been suggested that a combination of U.S. companies and Colombian and Panamanian interests have worked in its behalf. Another hypothesis derives from the nature of the project itself: a historical dream to connect the two continents that gives little attention to matters other than the physical possibility.

The officially proposed and accepted route will traverse the central-western part of Panama, through the middle of the rain forest region where precipitation averages more than 10 feet per year. Indeed, in some of the areas through which the highway must pass, more than 25 feet of rainfall per year have been recorded. A ten-year construction period is required because, according to *Final Conclusions*,* "earth work operations obviously will be restricted to the four-month dry season."

In Panama, the highway will connect only two hitherto isolated towns (Santa Fé and Yaviza) before crossing the border into Colombia at Palo de Las Letras (see map). From this point, an earlier plan called for continuing down Colombia's western rain forest to near Quibdo, before turning inland. This route, which would have cost $200 million, was considered because at that time the Atrato Swamp was thought impassable. Now, the U.S. Federal Aid Highway Act of 1970 claims that there is "conclusive proof of the feasibility of crossing the Atrato Swamp."

Proof of feasibility is apparently intended to mean money can work miracles. Plans detailed in *Final Conclusions* call for spending $47 million of the $63 million allocated to the Colombian segment on a 15-mile stretch of the swamp—about $3.5 million per mile. The cost is so phenomenal because "this entire section is borrow and fill construction." It will consist of a trapezoid shaped roadbed 182 feet wide at its base and 32 feet at the top. It is to be filled to a depth of 75 feet with material that is expected to compress over time to 25 feet. It's as much a dike as a road, and is designed to float above the "reasonably

**Final Conclusions and Recommendations Regarding Location, Design, and Construction of the Pan American Highway Through the "Darien Gap" in the Republics of Panama and Colombia;* report of the Darien Subcommittee of the Organization of American States.

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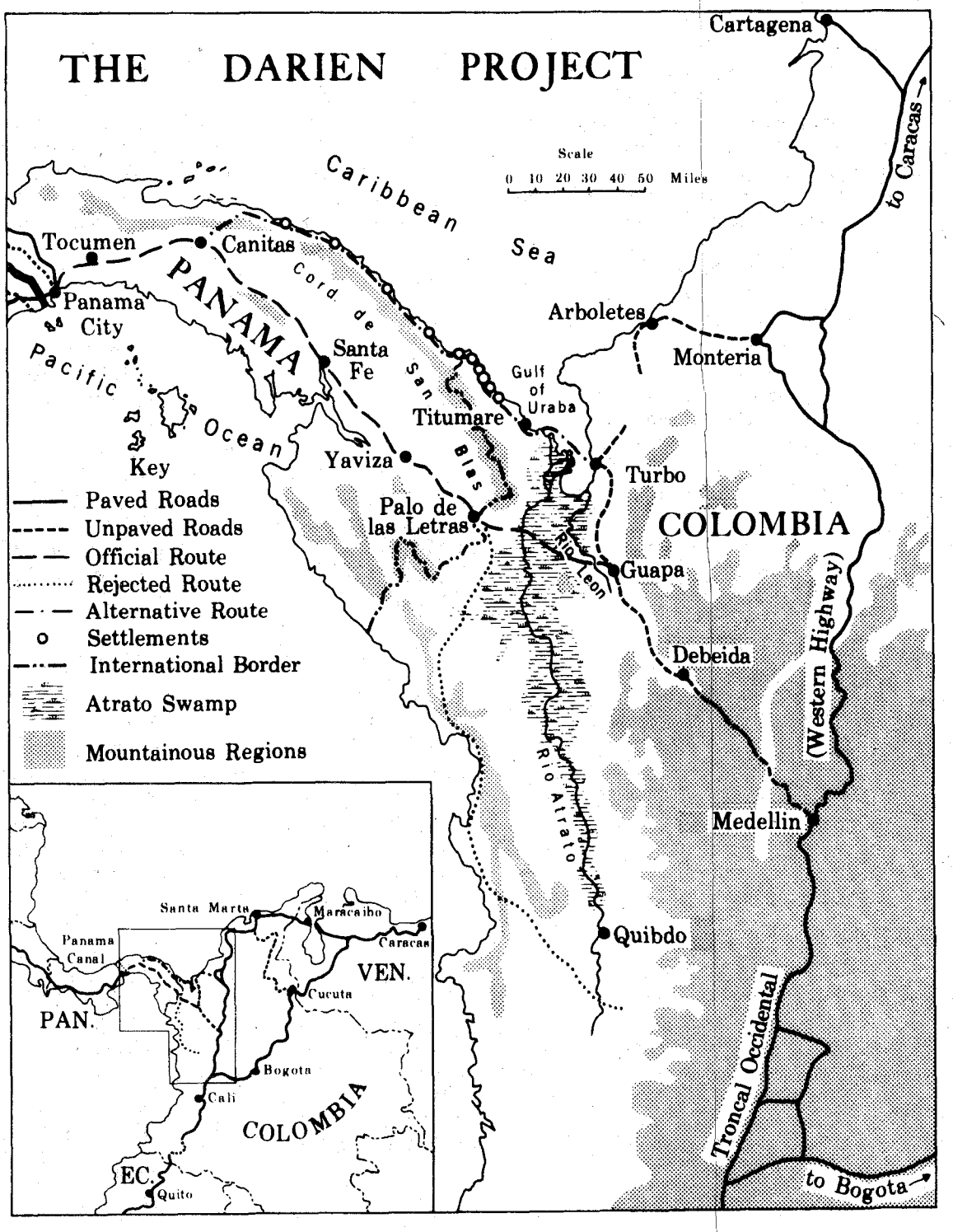
stable" floor of the swamp which has been discovered 20 to 50 feet below the surface muck. But this stability is itself dubious: the tests used to find bottom were carried out over less than one-half of the projected route.

It is also interesting that this section of the highway is not to be paved, probably because the floating roadbed will be continually buckling and bending. At least, *Final Conclusions* hints that such might be the case when it counsels against paving any section until "clearly justified by traffic needs," and further remarks: "In no case, however, should the final surface be constructed until the new grade has had sufficient time to clearly prove the stability and adequacy of the embankment, backslopes, and drainage structures."

The environmental effects of such a mammoth structure are likely to be profound. Who knows what blocking the natural drainage channels will do in an area of such high rainfall? And what will happen to the swamp as a result of dumping in such an enormous quantity of fill? What will happen to the ecology of the region as a result of the pesticides that must be used to permit construction gangs to work in this region of "high malaria incidence"? Such considerations are apparently of no concern to the highway's planners and builders.



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After emerging from the swamp, the highway is to join the road between Turbo and Medellín at Guapa. Here, inter-American traffic, regardless of destination, is programmed to turn south and traverse a road that is often closed because of landslides. As rainfall increases along this unpaved road (according to James J. Parsons, a geographer of the region, it increases "from 78 inches at Turbo to 56 inches *or more* inland along the Turbo-Medellín road"), the frequency of landslides also rises. Last October, a slide of 23 million cubic meters of dirt and rock closed some 10 miles of the road near Dabeiba.

Nowhere in the OAS reports is there any mention of the need for and the costs of improving this existing highway, so that it can handle the increased demands of inter-American traffic. The only hint is a note in both the 1966 and 1968 OAS reports to the effect that the road is "under reconstruction." To a certain extent that is a true statement, for this steep, narrow road often slips off the precipitous mountainsides and must be replaced. The maintenance and repair of this highway is apparently closely correlated with the fortunes of the Conservative Party in Colombia, since the region's electorate is predominantly conservative. However, the Conservatives now in power have not proposed the extreme step of paving it. The cost would approach $100 million, or about three times more than is annually allocated for all the roads in Colombia.

Even in the best of weather, and when the Turbo-Medellín stretch is open, average speed on the road is less than 25 miles per hour. So, after coming across the final link of the Pan American Highway, the traveler would still have approximately a ten-hour haul into Medellín. Therefore, in addition to the other difficulties outlined, the proposed route through the Darien Gap would leave the traveler precisely in the middle of nowhere.

From Tocumen or Cañitas, in Panama, an eastern route along the coast would be shorter, less humid, less expensive, and could be more quickly built than the officially proposed route. Panama's eastern Cordillera de San Blas is a low range of hills with very few peaks above 1,500 feet. It could easily be crossed in many spots; indeed, any new sea-level canal will have to do so. Upon reaching the coastal plains, the highway could continue south along the Caribbean to the city of Titumar, Colombia, on the Gulf of Uraba. This would be a distance of 212 miles, as against the 255-mile Darien route. Along its way, this alternative route would connect at least eleven coastal towns, traverse a drier area, and also have a great potential for tourist development, since this is the area of the famous Cuna Indians of San Blas, and beautiful Caribbean beaches.

In addition, studies of comparable areas have shown that roads constructed over such terrain can be built in considerably less time and entail much lower maintenance costs than do those that cross wet marsh lands or rain forests. Even the U.S. Federal Highway Administration acknowledges that a coastal road could be built in one-half the time it will take to construct the official route.

At Titumar, a system of ferry boats, similar to those used to cross the English Channel, could easily shuttle traffic across the placid Gulf of Uraba to Turbo. The Gulf of Uraba is an easier crossing than the channel, because it is well protected and subject to little wind or tide. Its location outside the hurricane belt was one of the principal reasons for the establishment of banana plantations in the area in 1962. The cost of this alternate route between Tocumen and Turbo—including ferry boats—is estimated to be $97 million, a saving of $66 million over the cost of the Darien route.

The ferry boat system—although it offends the dream of an unbroken intercontinental road—should be considered no realistic disadvantage. Indeed, it offers a practical advantage. The current concern in the U.S. Southwest over Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis would pale in comparison to an invasion of hoof and mouth disease from South America. This disease is prevalent in Colombian cattle, and although efforts are being made to combat it, some Panamanians are already beginning to voice concern lest it be carried along the highway. Smuggling is a way of life to many people in this region where poverty abounds, official salaries are low, and lucrative temptatations are available. It is no secret in Colombia that coastal cattlemen and others are looking forward to an "all land" route, whereby cattle and other goods could cross the frontier without rigorous inspection. With a ferry system, strict control measures could be more easily enforced.

Once traffic arrived in Turbo, the tourist could still turn south toward Medellín. However, a paved road between Montería, Colombia, and Caracas, Venezuela, does exist and would probably have greater appeal for most tourists than the Turbo-Medellín road. This attractive "Trans-Caribbean Highway," which passes through Colombia's picturesque and historical northern coast, could easily be extended to Turbo. An earlier report of the OAS stated that "it would be negligence not to call attention to the mutual interdependence of the two projects." But such attention was neglected in the final report.

The construction of the Pan American Highway from Turbo to Montería should be relatively inexpensive, because a network of secondary roads from Turbo to Arboletes, built by Colombia's agrarian reform agency, INCORA, is almost finished. In addition, Arboletes is connected by road to Montería. To improve this 100-mile stretch of road to the status of the inter-American system should not cost more than $25 million, because the road grade is there; it is located in relatively even terrain (the highest point between Montería and Turbo is only 800 feet), and it passes through no swamps.

At Montería, the traveler would have two attractive alternatives. If Medellín and points south (Ecuador, Peru, Chile, etc.) were his destination, Colombia's "Troncal Occidental"—the paving of which is now being financed by the World Bank and is scheduled for completion within two years—could be used. If the historical port cities of Cartagena or Santa Marta were his goal, then he would continue on the paved Trans-Caribbean Highway. The Venezuela-bound traveler would appreciate this direct route rather than having to double back to the coast from Medellín, as necessitated by the official route, or having to cross two of Colombia's mountain ranges to go by way of Bogotá and Cucuta.

Both United States and foreign interests may have had some stake in the selection of the expensive official

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route. On this point, Charles F. Bennett, professor of geography at the University of California, Los Angeles, wrote me a few months ago:

> It is generally held in Panama that much of the land along the route in eastern Panama has long since passed into the hands of a few well-placed families. Secondly, the arrangement recently arrived at between Panama and the United States vis-à-vis financing the construction appears to be a basic sweetening element in the larger question of canal treaty revisions.

The opening up of these hitherto isolated lands by means of the highway will certainly increase their value and consequently the wealth of their owners. Panama has supposedly made arrangements to take over a wide corridor on either side of the highway for controlled development. The nature of the development that Panama has in mind may be indicated by a still effective law stating what concessions Panama is willing to give to the construction companies. These include:

> (*1*) For each ten kilometers of road constructed, the right to obtain title to a plot of land one kilometer square bordering on the line of the road right of way . . . title shall be extended gratuitously.
>
> (*2*) Exclusive right to exploit lumbering and forestry resources along the total length of the roadway within a zone . . . one kilometer on each side of the centre of the roadway for a time of twenty years.
>
> (*3*) Right to exploit in the same zone . . . all deposits or iron, manganese, gold ores, or whatever other . . . [unclaimed] mineral.
>
> (*4*) Right to exploit free of all imposts [taxes] for a term of twenty years all products or benefits derived . . . [from the] above.

The U. S. railroad companies of the mid-1800s could hardly have written a more lucrative law for their transcontinental land route grants. If the "few well-placed families" also control the construction companies which are to receive the above mentioned benefits, the inducements should be very sweetening indeed.

In Colombia, also, there is strong support for the Atrato Swamp route, and several tracts on its behalf have been published by the committee Pro Defensa de Antioquia. These interests can be characterized as a combination of the historical Antioquian desire for an outlet to the sea, buttressed by Medellín capitalists who have land investments, primarily on the eastern edge of Uraba, devoted to cacao, cattle and bananas. Some land speculation may be involved, although intensive commercial agriculture is impractical in the Atrato Swamp and in the heavy rainfall regions of Panama. In the swamp itself, small-scale subsistence colonists are said to have penetrated almost 20 miles westward from Guapa, and they may derive some returns from sales of right of way. However, the legal entanglements probably would exclude most of them from making any speculative killings.

In essence, therefore, it appears that Colombian interest in the Atrato route is primarily based on the Antioquians' regional pride and *hopes* that international funding will follow the Pan American Highway to pave their Turbo-Medellín highway.

Charges of corporate intervention in the route selection might be raised. United Fruit Company is perhaps the best known U. S. firm in this region, having first invested $4 million in the area in 1962. This was soon followed by a $16 million loan from its financial arm, the First National Bank of Boston, to associated producers of the area. However, their plantations stretch along the eastern shore, and they load their bananas directly onto freighters in the Gulf.

Lumbering and paper interests may stand to benefit more directly; INDERENA, Colombia's natural resources conservation agency, "recently reported receiving requests from twelve foreign firms for licenses to develop forest areas," which include the Atrato River basin and Pacific Coast (*Colombia Today*, October 1969).

Boise Cascade Lumber Company, through its plywood-producing affiliate Triplex Pizano, the largest wood processor in Colombia, is already carrying out logging operations in the Atrato Swamp and the western areas of the Gulf of Uruba. Company spokesmen do not know whether the road will pass directly through the lumbering concessions.

The Container Corporation of America, through its Colombian firm, Carton de Colombia, does have a modern plant for producing banana-shipping boxes at Turbo. However, this company now receives its raw materials from another section of the country. Scott Paper and Kimberly Clark both have factories in Medellín, but the former, at least, does no logging in Colombia.

Several U. S. oil firms are carrying out exploratory operations in the Atrato Swamp. Phillips Petroleum Company, whose acreage of concessions runs to seven figures in Colombia, had done some drilling in the vicinity of the proposed highway. Gulf Oil and Superior Oil Companies are also exploring further south in the swamp.

In short, be it imperialism, corporate intervention, or regional development, only a few American companies would directly gain from the road's proposed route.

So in the end, perhaps the best explanation for the choice of the costly route of the Pan American Highway is that a line was drawn on a map to make a historical dream come true, and engineers were then sent out to survey, and justify, that line. The vision of an "all land route" overrode any consideration of a less expensive, quicker route that would involve a ferry system.

Inquiries to Congressional "watchdogs" on these matters are generally channeled either to the Federal Highway Administration—whose job it is to see the highway completed—or to the House Committee on Public Works, whose chairman, James Wright, Jr. of Texas, has been long involved in this Pan American Highway project. Chairman Wright has flown over the area and admits that the official route leaves "something to be desired." However, he states that "engineering, political realities, and financial possibilities all had to be harmonized into one plan," and he is "very anxious to see this project completed." In short, though even the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee of the House noted that ". . . this program should not be given a higher priority than many other urgently needed projects within the United States," interests both foreign and domestic, political and pecuniary, have banded together and are about to plunge the road through rain forest and swamp, with the U. S. taxpayer footing most of the bill. □

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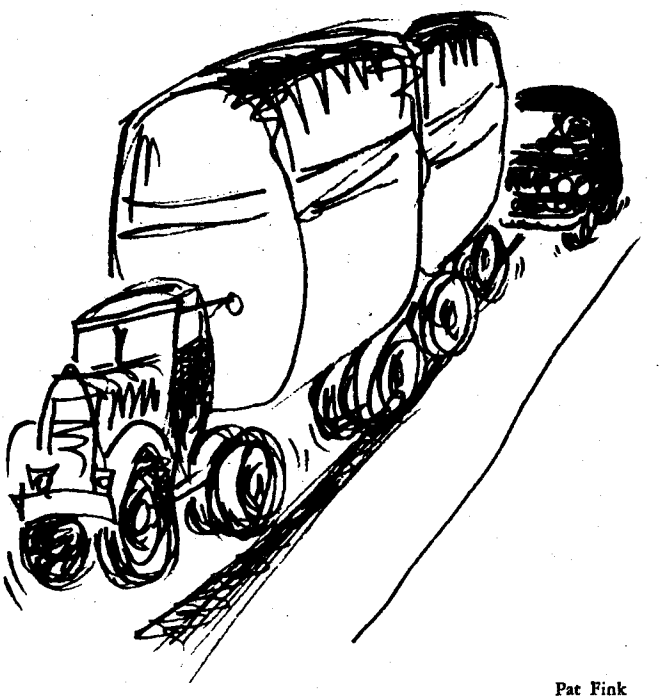
MASS TRANSIT

UP AGAINST THE CONCRETE WALL

G. C. THELEN, Jr.
Mr. Thelen is an investigative reporter, working in Washington for a national news organization.



Pat Fink

Washington

"Mass transit is a terminal patient that needs a transfusion before major surgery can be considered. In other words, unless we get operating subsidies quick, there will be no transit industry left to re-equip." So says a frustrated Administration official closely involved with the Department of Transportation's handcuffed $10 billion, twelve-year program of capital assistance to mass transit.

Compare that view from the cockpit to Transportation Secretary John A. Volpe's year-end assessment that "the department is on its way to curing the ills which have afflicted transportation in the United States," including those of mass transit. Mr. Volpe is correct in implying that 1971 was a landmark year for transit, but in the opposite sense: according to the American Transit Association, urban bus and subway patronage plummeted by 415 million rides in 1971, a decline three times steeper than the annual average over the last decade. The operating deficit was $360 million, up 8.5 per cent from 1970.

Adding those statistics to the number of appropriated transit dollars frozen by the Office of Management and Budget, one gets the story of how the Department of Transportation is failing to meet the real mass transit crisis, despite the injection of new money promised in 1970. "We have not yet been able to correct declining ridership, aging transit fleets or increasing deficits," admits Carlos C. Villarreal, administrator of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA). And says a Senate staff specialist in transit: "Huge promises were made two years ago, and there's been very little payoff. There's just a plain bureaucratic reluctance to commit money and a lack of any coherent idea of what they [UMTA] want to do."

As for coherent ideas, UMTA has been getting little help. The client transit industry lacks initiative, imagination and vigorous leadership. The highway lobby, working principally through Frank Turner of the Federal Highway Administration, is determined to prevent commitment of any federal money to new rapid rail systems. The concrete cabal wants it all to go for new busses on new urban freeways. The Departments of Labor and of Housing and Urban Development have snarled transit applications in red tape not of UMTA's making. Most state and local governments have been unable to produce adequate regional planning for mass transit.

For its part, Congress has lived up to one of its two major 1970 commitments to traffic-choked cities. It is providing money for capital purchase and research—but not for operating subsidies or debt service—at a rate that will make the first $3.1 billion installment of the $10 billion mass transit program available on schedule by 1975.

But transit forces feel that they were misled when they accepted supposedly long-term contract authority rather than their original demand for a transit fund, similar to the self-perpetuating chest of earmarked funds for highways. They understood that the $3.1 billion in contract authority wasn't subject to annual appropriation and could be committed for construction at once. Instead, the House Appropriations Committee limited commitments to $600 million for fiscal 1971 and $900 million for fiscal 1972.

Milton Pikarsky, Chicago's public works commissioner, said of these annual appropriations: "Most mass transit systems will be unable to start a project of any magnitude because the present funding arrangements cannot guarantee continued federal funding." The assurance of federal funding is important in gaining voter approval for taxes or bonds needed to raise the one-third matching share of a big project. Uncle Sam, in turn, doesn't commit his two-thirds until matching money is on the table.

Then there's the Administration's odd rejection of the politically popular program it borrowed from Sen. Harrison A. Williams of New Jersey and fought hard to pass. Instead of using available transit appropriations as a potent economic stimulator, the White House has refused to commit one-third each of the authorizations made in the last two years—it held back $200 million in fiscal 1971 and $300 million in fiscal 1972. The lid was imposed despite a $4.4 billion backlog of applications at UMTA —$900 million fundable immediately—and the Transportation Department's assurance that $800 million could have been committed during fiscal 1971 alone.

Protesting what Pikarsky calls the emasculation of the program, thirty-seven Senators have petitioned President

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Nixon to unfreeze the transit money. They understand—if White House aides don't—that mass transit is now a potent voter issue, especially in an election year. The White House's belated response was an appropriation request of $1 billion for the coming year—a net $500 million if frozen funds are subtracted.

UMTA has met the adversity by training its sights low. "It's no secret that our emphasis has been on busses," said James M. Beggs, the Transportation Under Secretary; more than 4,000 were ordered in 1971. But only one city, Pittsburgh, has gotten the federal go-ahead for a major new system—an elevated skyway where rubber-wheeled cars will run on a concrete roadbed. (This so-called Skybus is so volatile an issue in Pittsburgh that the Mayor recently erected a physical barrier to its construction.) Six cities—Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and Atlanta—are standing in the line with subway and transit applications as large as $1.2 billion. Another eight are seriously planning new fixed-rail networks.

Although Volpe's lieutenants deny it, transit officials infer a political bias in the Administration's spending priorities: subways would help only predominately Democratic big cities; new busses please voters in smaller Republican cities and suburbs. Dr. John A. Bailey, director of Northwestern University's Transportation Center, offers another explanation for the bus preference. "The lead time for delivery of a bus is six months, but it is years for a subway. The Transportation Department wants tangible results soon."

But, in many ways, the department seems to be working against just that kind of result. "Technological breakthroughs are not what John Q. Public is interested in," said Michael J. Cafferty, chairman of the Chicago Transit Authority. "He wants a pleasant ride at a reasonable cost." Yet UMTA research is concentrating on what one Congressional staffer calls "Buck Rogers stuff." These futuristic ventures include tracked-air cushion vehicles, monorails, and mini-rail cars called people movers. Nuts and bolts problems, such as noise and vibration in subway cars and rattling bus doors, aren't getting the attention most transit specialists believe they deserve. As a result, the busses being ordered with federal aid won't have many new features to attract patrons.

Then there's the prospect that many existing systems will be financially moribund and virtually riderless before new equipment arrives. "The industry is currently in a critical financial state, a state approaching crisis in many localities," the Transportation Department told Congress in November. "I won't say our position is hopeless, but if we were a ship, people would be on our deck singing *Nearer My God to Thee*," said a public transit manager.

Yet the Administration remains noncommital on operating subsidies, despite growing support in Congress for transfusions of up to $375 million a year. Cafferty, an Administration official before he moved to CTA in Chicago, said DOT knew in 1970 that the $12 billion capital program would falter without operating subsidies. But the public wasn't let in on that secret. "We felt we should get what we could and come back later saying 'let me paint the picture more fully,' " Cafferty said. □

RUSSIA'S MILITARY BURDEN

Soviet Arms in the Pentagon Mirror

LOUVAN E. NOLTING
Mr. Nolting is a Soviet area specialist working in Washington.

Washington

The alleged heavy burden of Soviet military spending has long been a weapon in the Pentagon's diversified arsenal for persuading the Congress to vote it large appropriations. This argument has been buttressed for two decades with various studies of Soviet military policy and expenditures made by a number of American scholars of the USSR. American Sovietologists, as a group, assume that Moscow gives very high priority to defense, the reason given being either outright military control of the state or the civilian leadership's obsession with military goals. The second explanation is more commonly advanced, especially by more liberal Soviet area specialists, but in either case the same picture is presented—the Soviet Union is committed to military expenditures that weigh upon it proportionately far more heavily than does our military spending upon us.

This conclusion is arrived at as follows: Soviet military power is roughly equivalent to ours, give or take advantages to one side or the other in different weapons systems. Therefore, Soviet defense spending must also fall within our bracket. Meanwhile, Soviet gross national product (GNP) is about half ours (a rather stale evaluation maintained for more than ten years, despite the fact that in the 1960s, Soviet GNP grew more rapidly than did the American). Accordingly, military requirements are the drain on the Soviet economy that they are on ours. Worse yet, inasmuch as total GNP is smaller in the Soviet Union, its armament spending causes more than twice the drain on the civilian portion of the economy, for a simple calculation shows that the civilian remainder of their GNP is only about 44 per cent of our civilian remainder (assuming the U.S. military share of GNP to be 10 per cent).

From this it is an easy step to the dubious conclusion that our level of military expenditure is quite tolerable, while the Soviet level places their economy under the most critical strain. The United States, according to some Sovietologists, is not under the same pressure as the Soviet Union to divert military and space spending toward

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other priorities, because our much greater national income enables us to provide adequately for all our needs. Such an attitude, held at a time when it is more obviously the United States than the Soviet Union that is racked by misplaced priorities, reminds one of Christ's allusion to the mote and the beam.

Even Senator Proxmire, the leading Senatorial gadfly of the Pentagon, uncritically, though for reasons of his own, accepts this view of the Soviet Union as a nation bent double under the weight of arms. Last November he noted: "The economy of the Soviet Union is being very heavily burdened by their efforts to close the military gap with the U.S. . . . Their civilian economy continues to suffer severely from the military burden. . . . Their situation is like ours, except that their need to revise priorities is much more pronounced because they are severely handicapping the growth of their civilian economy." Ironically, this line of argument, adduced by Proxmire to demonstrate the readiness of the Soviet Union for arms reduction, is all too frequently advanced by advocates of high military spending as evidence of the extremes to which Russia is prepared to carry its threat—a threat that can best be countered by a thicker slice of the budgetary pie, especially as thicker slicing hurts us less than it does them.

One or two scholars have demolished the simple equation of one-half the GNP equals twice the defense burden by showing that the equation is based on an incompatible mixture of dollar and ruble values (Soviet military outlays valued in dollars and Soviet GNP formulated as an average of dollar and ruble weights). But never is the essential question pursued: do the Soviets spend as much as we do on the military, in terms of either dollars or rubles? Instead, Soviet area economists have begged this question and concentrated on tangential matters, such as the extent of "hidden" defense appropriations in the Soviet budget, the comparative value of the defense ruble and the defense dollar, and the pricing in dollars of observed and assumed Soviet arms.

This failure to inquire stems from basic attitudes. Sovietology, unlike other branches of social science, remains in an ivory redoubt, unventilated by the current breezes of revisionism. From this sanctuary, the Soviet Union continues to appear as an incompatible hybrid of mortal threat and incompetence. The spirit of the cold war stifles objective analysis of the Soviet military posture.

Part of the blame lies with the Russians themselves. In their obsession with secrecy they release only a single hard figure on military spending—the annual global appropriation in the state budget. This figure is not itemized nor accompanied by any direct data on costs or amounts of the components. Furthermore, unitemized residuals in the rest of the state budget evoke suspicions that armament outlays may be hidden there.

The announced Soviet defense budget for 1972 stands at 17.9 billion rubles, the same as for 1970 and 1971. At the official rate of exchange (one ruble to $1.11), this equals $19.87 billion, much less than the $77.5 billion of the U. S. military budget for the 1971-72 fiscal year. The proportion of the Soviet budget to GNP (adjusted to the American concept of GNP) was 4.6 per cent in 1971 and 5.3 per cent as the average of the last five years. That also is substantially less than the U.S. military proportion of the GNP (6.8 per cent for 1971-72 and 8.7 per cent as the average of the last five years).

Such is the situation based on Soviet official information, which of course is too sparse and vague to complete the inquiry. American and Western scholars therefore substitute their own estimates of the Soviet defense bill. Most of these approximations currently range from $50 billion to $60 billion a year, compared to the U.S. level of $75 billion to $80 billion. The excess of the American total over that of the Soviet is accounted for by the war in Vietnam; but for that expense, it is said, the military allowances of the two countries would be roughly equal, or that of the Russians perhaps slightly larger.

The methodology for these estimates displays an audacity out of proportion to the amount of hard information available. First, an array of "hidden" defense items, concealed in other sections of the state budget, is assumed; these include, among other outlays, military research and development, nuclear weapons, military stockpiling, investments in defense plants, foreign military aid, and space expenditures (it is rarely mentioned that the last three items are for the most part excluded from the U. S. military budgets as well). The value given to these hidden items ranges anywhere from 20 per cent to 100 per cent of the explicit budget, depending on the generosity of the particular analyst. Secondly, the restructured Soviet defense budget is valued upward by translating rubles into "defense" dollars. Rubles supposedly buy more for the military than do dollars, an advantage attributed to undervaluation or unrealistic prices rather than to economy or different requirements.

The estimates of Soviet military expenditures thus produced are characterized by speculation founded on no real statistical or financial evidence. The whole procedure almost suggests a Procrustean bed technique, designed to fit Soviet military spending to the Pentagon's budget.

An obvious alternative means of estimating Soviet expenditures—collating them item by item with American expenditures—seems to have escaped the attention of Soviet area specialists. This method would not lend itself to precise quantification, ostensible or otherwise, but it would offer a descriptive comparison of Soviet and American expenditures much closer to reality than are numbers derived from "methodology" and little else. Drawing upon the published details of the U. S. military budget, one can juxtapose each American item with its equivalent Soviet item and surmise the comparative value of the latter, based upon what is known quantitatively and qualitatively of the military economics and policies of the two countries. This approach will be demonstrated below in a very sketchy way, using only the major categories of expenditure. More refined analysis is possible for the long-range concern of Sovietologists.

The Administration's initial estimate of requirements for national defense for the 1971-72 fiscal year is used for this exercise, because it contains the most detailed expenditure breakdown by item. The first item I shall take is procurement of weapons and military equipment. The reader may be surprised to learn that, of the total defense budget of $77.5 billion, only $17.9 billion, or 23 per cent, is allocated for such procurement, conceptually the heart

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of military spending. This amount is increased somewhat by adding the research and development item of $7.5 billion, which embodies the cost of arms research and of testing and organizing the production of new devices. These two items, the military hardware portion of defense, together make up nearly a third of the Pentagon's budget. There are many indications that Soviet arms and related hardware come much more cheaply than do American, whether valued in rubles or in dollars. This is admitted even by Pentagon spokesmen during frank moments. The reasons are summarized below:

(*1*) *The profligacy of the American arms procurement system.* The American procurement system is characterized by a symbiotic relationship between the Pentagon and defense contractors, and by Congressional extension of a purse string infinitely adjustable to changes in cost. "Cost overruns" in development of new armaments have been the rule because of the reluctance of Pentagon procurement offices to hold contractors to original estimates. The U.S. armed services, in addition, constantly seek expensive gadgets and functional extras of marginal and contingent combat value.

(*2*) *The general simplicity and conservative designing of Soviet armaments.* American studies of Soviet arms and armed vehicles show a decided tendency on the part of the Russians to develop plain, unsophisticated designs and structures. Frills and "groundless and frivolous changes in design" are discouraged by official instruction. Rough surface finishing of equipment is tolerated. Combat aircraft lack the complex instrumentation and power controls of American planes. Partly for that reason, Soviet fighter planes can be produced at an estimated one-fifth the cost of American fighters. In addition, the Soviets strictly follow the rule of "design inheritance," that is, adding improved features or new mechanisms to existing models, in contrast to the common American practice of replacing still useful models.

(*3*) *Different approaches to military research and development.* Our Defense Department has generally followed the policy of "concurrency," that is, making contracts with defense companies that cover both the development and manufacture of new weapons systems, rather than having prototypes built and tested before making a commitment to production. This policy has been a factor in the notorious cost overruns, since the difficulties (and even the possibility) of realizing new weapons concepts cannot be fully known before research and testing. The Defense Department, however, has recently shifted from concurrency to "fly-before-buy" contracting, more in line with the traditional Soviet policy of encouraging extensive prototype development on the basis of competition among testing and design institutes to build the quickest, and therefore the least intricate, model.

(*4*) *The general technological lag of Soviet weaponry behind American.* This is acknowledged both by critics of Pentagon spending and by Pentagon arms experts themselves. The United States has today a two-to-five-year innovative lead in most weapons systems, and especially in strategic arms. Indeed, most of the new strategic weapons concepts of the past decade have been devised and developed by the United States. Whether the Russian lag is deliberate policy or the result of backward technology, it is economical. In the field of research and development it is much less expensive to follow than to lead. The laggard can observe what the front-runner is about. In effect, we appear to do much of the Soviets' research and development for them.

Why do the Soviets prefer military austerity, while the American military go in for chrome, gadgetry and pushy innovation? The Soviet preference has been attributed superficially to the mass, quantitative "traditions" of the Soviet officer corps or to the absence in the USSR of the "affluent" tastes which permeate our much wealthier society. A more obvious, if equally undocumented, explanation may simply lie in different systems of defense financing. The Soviet defense establishment may well operate under the constraints of a low budgetary ceiling —as advocated for our military a few years ago by Senator Proxmire—rather than under the high ceiling, blank-check procedure enjoyed by the Pentagon. In order to get the military punch it wants from a low fixed budget, the Soviet Ministry of Defense would be motivated to seek the cheapest instead of the most costly solutions. If that is true, it would speak volumes about the comparative influence of the military-industrial complexes in the two countries.

The second largest category in the U.S. military budget is personnel appropriation. This, totaling $23.8 billion or nearly 31 per cent of the budget, includes the military payroll, quarters, clothing, subsistence, special allowances and retirement pay. Military personnel costs also are much lower in the USSR. The widest differential lies in the pay of Soviet and American enlisted men. A Soviet recruit receives a "cigarette and candy" allowance of about 50 rubles a year, compared to the entrance salary of $1,811 for the American draftee. Other Soviet personnel costs are also substantially lower. The estimated annual personnel outlay per Soviet serviceman, as derived from a statement by Khrushchev in 1960 and adjusted for inflation since then, is about $1,700. Multiplied by the number of Soviet servicemen, this rough estimate yields a total personnel bill of about $6 billion. That is a quarter of the American cost, although Soviet armed strength is currently 25 per cent higher than the American.

The next major item in the American military budget is operation and maintenance, which costs $20.2 billion, or about 26 per cent of the total. This covers noncombat supplies, maintenance of installations and bases, administrative costs, training and medical care, transportation, operational costs of ships, planes and ground vehicles, civilian salaries, and numerous other overhead expenditures. As far as operation and maintenance are concerned, the Soviet military dwell in a comparative Sparta. Operational support of combat troops is much more lavish in the U.S. Army, which has shown a tendency to become featherbedded with command and support elements at the expense of fighting units. An American infantry division numbers 48,000 men, of which less than 9,000 are combat troops, the remainder being in support and logistic categories. A Soviet infantry division has 13,000 men, of which 7,000 are combat soldiers. A Soviet tank division numbers about half the men per tank of an American tank division. Whatever the differences in tactical doc-

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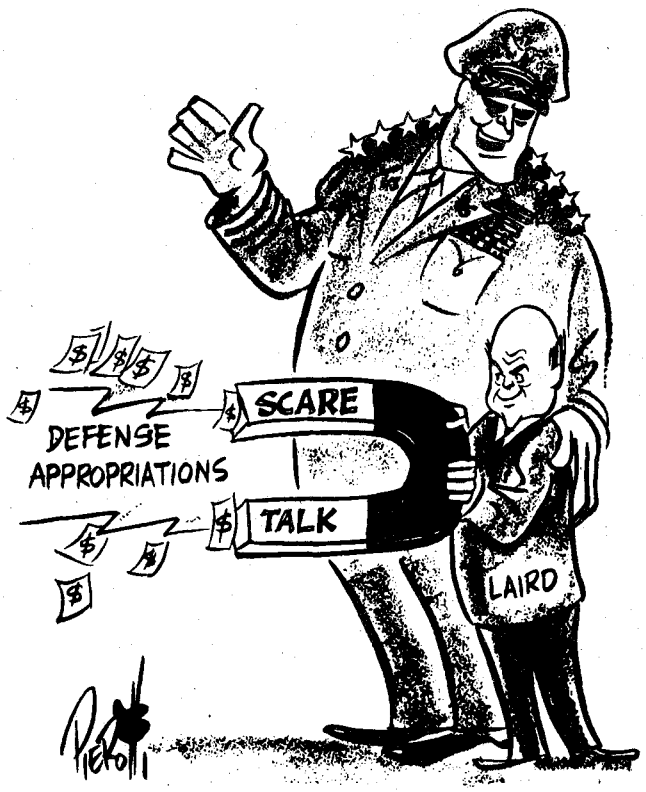

"It Works Every Time"

trine that produce such disparities, the saving in hard rubles is eloquent.

The remaining enumerated items in the U.S. budget are relatively minor (adding up to about 10 per cent of the total), and include military construction, ABM installation, family housing, military atomic energy, allowances for pay increases for an all-volunteer force, special military assistance in Indochina and civil defense. The Soviet equivalents of these items (those that exist) no doubt share in the bargain prices of the major spending categories—with the possible exception of civil defense; that is one defense activity in which the Soviets are more extravagant than the Americans.

Besides the itemized U.S. costs, there are three more categories of major magnitude: Vietnam, NATO and foreign bases. These expenditures are not identified as such in the budgetary breakdown, but cut across most of the items listed in the budget and must be extracted from them.

The first of these "cut-across" items is the cost of the war in Vietnam. Except for estimated annual military aid to North Vietnam of $1 billion (valued in dollar prices), this item does not exist within the Soviet military burden and, accordingly, must be deducted in estimating Soviet expenditures in the itemized categories. American analysts of the Soviet budget acknowledge this exclusion, as it is rather conspicuous. Consequently, their estimates of Soviet military spending generally match the U.S. defense effort *minus Vietnam*. The cost of the war depends on whether one considers total costs or incremental costs (expenditure after deducting maintenance costs of the military units involved if there were no war). During fiscal 1969, the peak year of spending for Vietnam, expenditures were calculated at $28.8 billion (full costs) and $21.6 billion (incremental costs). The estimate for the 1971 fiscal year is $15 billion and $11.2 billion respectively. Thus, the absence for the Soviet Union of a war in Indochina greatly reduces its military load.

Maintaining American NATO forces is put at $14 billion, or $21 billion to $25 billion, if the cost of the "nuclear umbrella" for Europe is added. Spokesmen for NATO maintain that this cost would be no less if the forces and facilities of the United States in Europe were transferred back home, and that, furthermore, the Soviet Union has an expenditure equivalent in support of the Warsaw Pact. But these assertions warrant examination, considering the huge NATO infrastructure, the costliness of maintaining facilities overseas, and the large number of dependents of NATO personnel who contribute to the balance of payments deficit. The maintenance costs of Soviet forces stationed in Eastern Europe are largely borne by the Eastern European countries themselves, in contrast to the American experience in Europe. Transporting troops to adjacent areas of Eastern Europe is not as expensive as transferring them overseas.

The final major "cut-across" item in the U.S. military budget is maintenance of troops and bases abroad, but outside NATO and Vietnam. The number of American forces in this category was 177,000 in 1971. The Soviet Union in 1971 maintained an estimated 20,500 to 25,500 military personnel outside Eastern Europe and Mongolia, most of them advisers and technicians and 80 per cent of them in Egypt. The salaries of the latter are paid by the Egyptian Government. American forces overseas, however, are scarcely an index to the far-flung web of facilities owned by the United States abroad—about 400 major bases and 3,000 minor installations. The number of Soviet foreign bases abroad is too meager to offer comparison.

A complete comparison of military burdens should logically include military aid and even economic aid, since most of the latter has a cold-war motivation. Half of our military aid and all of our economic aid may be considered a "cut-out" rather than a "cut-across" expenditure, since it is not assigned to the military appropriation, but placed elsewhere in the federal budget. Most of it is not included even in the so-called foreign aid bills. A compilation of total foreign aid from all sources prepared by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee shows a fiscal 1972 amount of $9.5 billion, of which $4.4 billion is for military aid. Soviet aid to the non-Communist world (for 1969) was estimated at approximately $800 million, of which about $350 million was for military aid. Soviet aid to the Communist world, the bulk of it to North Vietnam and Cuba, is an uncertainty, but probably does not exceed $1.5 billion. Most Soviet foreign aid is in the form of long-term credits, whereas most American aid is in grants. It is a small exaggeration to say that the Soviets charge for their aid, while we pay with ours.

In summary, the fragmentary information that can be found on Soviet military spending does not prove the existence of an onerous burden far outweighing ours, either absolutely or proportionately. Indeed, real Soviet defense spending, even when calculated in American prices and even granting a broad parity in military

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strength with the United States, may not be far off the $20 billion that constitutes the official exchange rate version of the overt Soviet appropriation. That, however, is not another measurement, but a suggestion prompted by the discussion in this article. Neither does it deny that Soviet defense spending is an unwelcome drain on resources and manpower and imposes a high opportunity cost on the civilian economy. The aim here is rather to point out an alternative approach to measuring the Soviet military expenditure that is not tailored to anti-Soviet frames of reference or to continuation of high military priorities in this country. □

'REMEMBER MY NAME'

FEDERAL JOB GHETTO

RICHARD HEBERT
Mr. Hébert, a former investigative and urban affairs reporter for The Atlanta Constitution, *is now a free-lance journalist in Washington, D.C.*

Washington

Doing the American Government's dirty work—cleaning its corridors, filing its memos, carrying its letters—isn't very rewarding, not only because little of the taxpayers' money gets into the payroll for these jobs but, much more regrettably, because personnel treatment at the bottom ranks of U.S. Government is a national disgrace. It makes of those ranks an employment ghetto from which few of the 1.25 million lowest paid workers can ever escape to better positions. They are locked into dead-end jobs where there is no "next rung up the ladder," and little training or incentive or support services. Supervisors are apt to be white male straw bosses, preoccupied with their own chances for advancement and functioning much as plantation foremen once did. They have little interest in training workers to move ahead, thus leaving their old posts vacant for untrained recruits. And trainees are of course anathema to any supervisor eager to keep his shop's production high—and his promotion prospects bright.

Because the federal agencies have been blind to this state of affairs, Plan D of the Public Service Careers program (PSC) was started less than two years ago; and because the agencies remained blind, Plan D is now being terminated—to the dismay of some Congressional and labor figures.

PSC was started in 1969 by the Department of Labor's Manpower Administration to encourage local, state and federal governments to do what government was pressing private industry to do—hire those who used to be called "the disadvantaged" (now less patronizingly called "the minimally skilled" by the Civil Service Commission) and train them for advancement. Plan D, begun in 1970, was the federal government's share of the PSC effort, to be paid for by the Department of Labor and administered by the government's own employment office, the Civil Service Commission. It addressed itself to the lowest five tiers of federal pay—the above mentioned 1.25 million workers who are paid less than the $6,500 annually that the Labor Department considered "low income" for an urban family of four.

A commission bulletin, issued shortly after the signing of an agreement with then Labor Secretary George P. Shultz, described Plan D as a "long term commitment . . . to employ the disadvantaged and to upgrade lower level employees." During the eighteen months of Nixon-style "benign neglect" that ensued, this "long term commitment" has been trimmed to a short-term platitude.

Plan D offered federal agencies funds and technical aid to devise new ways of doing business at the bottom of the federal personnel ladder. Money was provided to cover part of the cost of training employees on the job and of making supervisors aware of the problems—an ingredient identified by the commission as a "key element which should underscore the important role the supervisor plays in the successful adjustment of the PSC trainee to the work situation." Funds also were available to help pay for support services, such as day care for children of working mothers. Agencies were helped to restructure job categories for those caught in dead-end jobs by meaningless, arbitrarily drawn descriptions. Those agencies that took on PSC trainees were given "ceiling relief" for a year —that is, they were permitted to retain full complements of nontrainee workers, but were required after the year to absorb the trainees under their work force "ceilings" as attrition provided openings.

Some $10 million has been spent on these programs in federal agencies since the inception of Plan D, and those agencies have committed themselves to train about 18,000 trainees—8,902 workers just entering federal service and 9,113 "upgrade" trainees who are already in federal jobs. These numbers represent a success only by comparison with the inactivity that preceded Plan D. During the years immediately before its inception, the chances for lowest level federal employees to get training was in fact diminishing. While instances of training increased by 13 per cent for the top ranks of federal employment between 1968 and 1970, they *declined* by about 13 per cent for employees in the lowest four pay schedules. Any reversal of this trend that Plan D could effect was bound to be called a success.

That it was no more than a meager success is evident from the fact that about 18,000 trainees brought in by Plan D during 1970-71 barely restored the level of training opportunities to what they had been before 16,580 training openings were lost in the preceding two years. As one production-line supervisor in government pointed out recently, directors, administrators and others at the managerial levels of government have abundant opportunities to attend lunch-and-cocktails sessions, meetings, seminars and lectures, not to mention professional training

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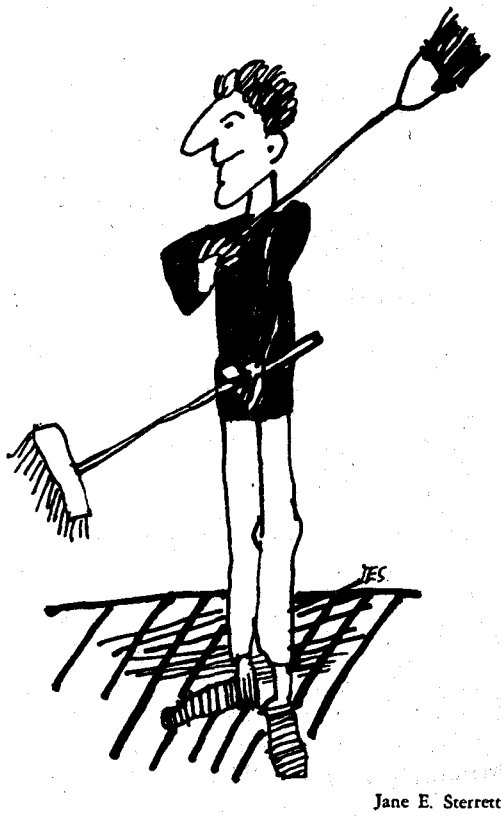
programs, but the low-pay messenger is "so important" that he "can't be spared to see a movie" or spend an hour or so a week in a course designed to give him a new skill.

Despite its modest accomplishment, the PSC's Plan D did receive a good mark from the General Accounting Office. The GAO has yet to release its report, but it is known that the office was encouraged by federal agency response to Plan D and believed it capable of bringing about marked improvements in the hiring and promoting of the federal service's least skilled workers.

To convince federal managers that they should enroll their agencies under Plan D, the Civil Service Commission planned a film that would "make known some of the unknown quantities of the complex problems faced by lower-level employees with limited education and skills." The film would "not answer questions as much as it [would] challenge the viewer to ask questions of himself."

The firm chosen to make the picture, Broadcast Productions and Services of Washington, D.C., proposed a $30,000 half-hour "sensitivity" film that would use the faces and voices of trainees, low-level federal employees and their managerial and supervisory employers to tell the story, without scripts or anything else that would seem contrived. The movie would seek to contrast the attitudes of the custodial workers and messengers with those of their straw bosses and upper-level managers. The censorship that has beset the production since it was begun in the summer of 1970 is an excellent example of how the bureaucracy of the commission reacted to the honesty inherent in Plan D itself.

The link between the film company and the agency was Mrs. Tina Hobson, director of agency operations within the Public Service Careers Office of the Civil Service Commission's Bureau of Training. As writer of the film I was among those who first met Mrs. Hobson for lunch in the executives' dining room of the Civil Service Commission. When we inquired about the intended audience of the film, she gestured toward the room and said those present were to be our "typical" audience. They were management-level decision makers—all white, almost all male, almost all older than 45. She said they were the men who had to decide whether or not their respective agencies would enter into contracts under Plan D, but that they were so distant from the problem and the employees most directly affected by it—most of them nonwhite, female and young—that they were only vaguely aware that a problem existed.



Jane E. Sterrett

To reach such an audience, the film crew believed, only a blunt portrayal of life at the bottom of the federal ladder would work. For that we needed at least partial freedom of access within federal office buildings. The commission, which could have opened some doors for us, declined to help. Setting up beachheads on the bureaucratic islands of other federal agencies was not the commission's way of doing business. It was not Washington protocol.

We were repeatedly cautioned against making the film an "equal opportunity" presentation, by which we were made to understand: don't concentrate on black faces. We were told to find Indians, Spanish-speaking Americans and white women, because they, too, were victims of the problem. In Washington, however, the problem is almost invariably black-white; it is a civil rights, equal opportunity problem of the first order.

Seeking out supervisory level persons was difficult without Civil Service Commission assistance. It meant having foremen released from their production shops on government time, getting permission to film inside their shops, and assuring them that they were free to speak their minds. Public Service Careers coordinators from various federal agencies were enlisted to find supervisors within their agencies who would be willing to talk. It was the only effective —but hardly the most desirable—way for outsiders to invade the fiefdoms of federal agencies. As a result, three supervisors were dispatched from their agencies, all three of them black men. They could speak well enough about how ill prepared *other* supervisors are to deal effectively and understandingly with the human problems of their employees, but they were obviously not the ones to portray that typical supervisory role at first hand. Their agencies had selected them because they were not typical, but rather the best they had to offer.

We ourselves lapsed from complete honesty at times. Whenever we asked a group of black trainees or employees to participate in unscripted interviews for the film, we were inevitably pressed for assurances that they were not being "used," that the film would not become simply another "whitewash." We gave the assurances, though sometimes unsure that the commission would stand behind us.

Statements that most acutely depicted the inability of managers and supervisors to understand and empathize with low-rank employees had to be discarded. For instance, we were not permitted to use the face and voice of Joe Bean of the Civil Service Commission, then overseeing the writing of guidelines and procedures for Plan

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D, but now director of training assistance, who was probably being more honest than anyone else about the commission's motives when he said—on tape and on camera—"Many agencies are encountering difficulties in carrying out their missions because they have to serve minority people, and of course we know that minority people make up a large percentage of the disadvantaged people in this country. And if you're going to serve minority people, then you need more minority people on your staff *to at least give the appearance that their views are being represented.*" (Emphasis added.)

We were warned against using any statements that reflected badly on any federal agency. Other statements that had to be censored from the film usually bore too heavily on the racial aspects of the oppression suffered by low-level federal employees, but sometimes remarks were cut simply because they were too caustic about the Establishment, the system, the bureaucracy. When interviewing for the film, I had found a large reservoir of anger and frustration in the bottom ranks.

After most of the interviewing and filming had been done, Mrs. Hobson informed us that the film would have to be delayed until it could include a "success." That required at least one ongoing training program for PSC recruits, none of which existed in 1970 or early 1971. The Civil Service Commission had ready two rooms full of unused computers and related key-punch equipment, but no students to make use of them. By resort to trickery, a "class" of "volunteers" was rounded up from the commission building's own offices and posed through an imitation classroom sequence. Honesty had already been compromised; on that day it was abandoned.

It also became obvious that the Civil Service Commission was more interested in presenting a cleaned-up image of itself and its program than in an honest portrayal of the situation that had given rise to Plan D. What did mid-management need to be told: that there was a serious problem spreading through the lower ranks, or that the commission was on the job? We believed the former; apparently the commission believed the latter.

When the script of the film—a long string of edited, interlaced interviews—was presented to Mrs. Hobson, her response dispelled any doubt: there was to be more "information" about how Plan D worked, about the commission's role in it, and about how an agency should plan for it, and less about the complex web of obstacles facing bottom-level federal workers.

The revisions insisted upon by the Public Service Careers bureaucracy at the Civil Service Comission made the film a failure: it succeeded at neither of its missions—sensitivity training nor description of, and fact book about, how the commission was operating Plan D.

Still, too much time and film had been spent recording the sentiments and experiences of the government's lowest level employees not to have some of it spill through in the finished product. Even its title, *Remember My Name,* was taken from the statements of one worker and one black supervisor, to the effect that most bosses in the federal government don't even know the names of the messengers and other low-rank employees they see daily in the halls of their office buildings.

Even though the film had been paid for, several top-ranking officials balked when it was finally shown to the executive staff of the Civil Service Commission. According to one newsman's account, the executives found it "offensive." They wanted it trimmed from twenty-seven minutes to about twelve minutes. Needless to say, sequences in which employees honestly described the frustration of their ambitions and their desire simply to be recognized as proud, working human beings, were to be excised. The executive staff took charge of the film and appointed a six-man "editing committee" to cut it.

Mrs. Hobson, now the picture's defender, retaliated with a telegram to the members of the commission itself, asking them to view the film uncut. Chairman Robert E. Hampton coolly responded that he would await the recommendation of the executive staff, which had already made it abundantly clear that the film would not be sent to the commissioners until it was scissored. But Hampton changed his mind and did see the film. He let it be known, via the press, that he thought the film "demeaned" low-pay federal workers. The film's producer, Robert Johnson, has responded in a letter to the commission chairman that he is "amazed" by and takes "strong exception" to Hampton's position. Rather than demeaning the employees, the film takes a "look at the demeaning situation in which low-level employees are caught," Johnson said. "Since when is it demeaning for a low-level employee to clearly state the reality of his situation?"

Still it is reported that *Remember My Name* has been cut to seventeen minutes and that the "editing committee" is trying to snip out further undesirable words and references—such as that there ever was a project specifically called a "Public Service Careers" program. If they are successful, the film will take on a Kafka-like quality of bewildering purposelessness.

The story of this mini-controversy leaked to the press. Accounts of it appeared in the Washington *Star* and the *Federal Times* (published for federal employees), and the dispute rose from being an intramural affair at the Civil Service Commission up to the attention of the Joint Economic Committee of Congress, which at that time was looking into President Nixon's economics as related to problems of economics. Shortly after last Thanksgiving, ten members of the committee's staff were given a private, unsanctioned, off-the-record showing of the film. Staff executive director, John R. Stark, remarked, "I don't understand what they're so antagonized by in it." Several viewers, themselves government workers, didn't think it showed the plight of the workers to be nearly as bad as it really is.

The controversy then attracted the attention of Sen. Frank E. Moss (D., Utah), a member of the Senate Civil Service Committee, who sent a letter to Civil Service Commission Chairman Hampton asking to see "the entire 27-minute original version." Senator Moss's office told the press that when he received a print of the film he would have a showing—press invited. Hampton answered by asking that the Senator hold off until both the original and the "edited" versions of the film were ready for showing—which, of course, could mean indefinite postponement.

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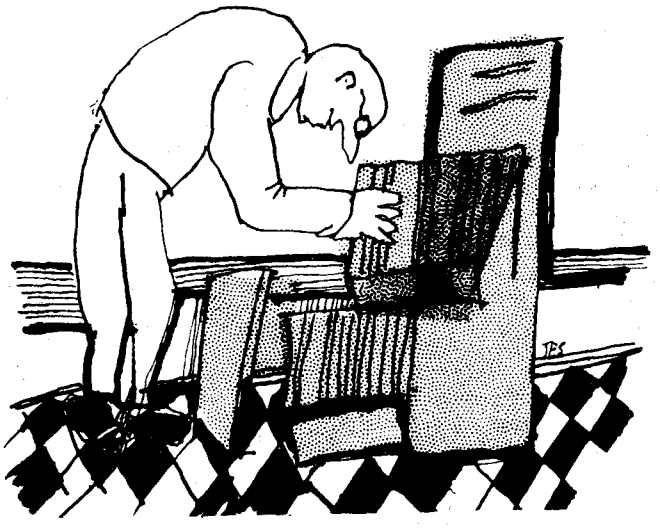
It is unlikely that the uncensored film ever will be shown, except under Congressional order. Despite the GAO's still unpublished optimism about the potential for Plan D, not only the film but the entire program is being quietly scuttled. The decision to do so was first mentioned as early as last August when Robert Moss, acting director of the Labor Department's Public Service Careers Division, telephoned Mrs. Hobson's superior at the Civil Service Commission and said that Labor's Assistant Secretary for Manpower, Malcolm Lovell, had decided to phase



out Plan D as of June 30, 1972, and that the commission should adjust its budget accordingly. At that time the film had not been delivered in final form to the commission, yet nothing was said to the film contractors. Instead, the future of Plan D has been kept in a state of official limbo and Bernard Rosen, executive director of the Civil Service Commission, could tell the public that "decisions" had not been made, that a continued flow of funds depended on the Department of Labor, and that everyone—including himself—had to await the President's budget to see what the decisions were to be. (The Labor budget requests $62 million for PSC, none of it for Plan D or the Civil Service Commission. Labor will be free to allocate the funds among its various plans as it sees fit—even to the exclusion of Plan D.) Of course, says Rosen, he and others at the commission "will be very disappointed" if the federal component of Public Service Careers is ended.

Yet the commission was doing little enough to save the program. It could have made official, written application for additional money from Labor. If turned down, it could have appealed to the Office of Management and Budget, now headed by Shultz, who, as Secretary of Labor, had initiated Plan D in the first place. One OMB program monitor let it be known unofficially at the commission that the budget office, if asked, would do what it could to find funds to save Plan D. But the commission has done none of these things.

As a last resort, the commission could take its case to the Congress, asking for authorization to administer a grant program and the appropriations to fund it and keep Plan D alive. Again, the commission has declined to act.

It is as though the commission were intent on destroying the program, a hypothesis that would also explain its executive staff's attempts to excise all references to PSC from the film. Indeed, the staff was afraid even of Plan D's own "successes." A report, to be entitled "Opportunities for All," had been written and sent to the printing office. It told small success stories of PSC training and placement. According to Mrs. Hobson, though the booklet was in type at the end of last November, and back at the Public Service Careers office for proofreading, it was ordered withdrawn from publication.

The probable explanations for such ostrich-like actions run deep into the nature of federal bureaucratic inertia. The Civil Service Commission has never before administered a grants program or dealt with the small daily realities of job getting and job holding. It has issued papers, made speeches and told agency executives what they should do. Plan D was its first venture into the actual activity of finding jobs for its clients, giving them orientattion, easing their way into the job market, trying to provide them with the means to advance. Veterans at the commission—of which there are many in the upper echelon—simply balked at the new turn, and headed back whence they had come: to issuing paper and training executives.

The Department of Labor, meanwhile, apparently believes that federal agencies should themselves be achieving the goals of Plan D without special federal grants. So they should, but their past responses to the plight of bottom-of-the-ladder employees, to say nothing of the Civil Service Commission's defensive, self-insulating response to the film, will scarcely raise the spirits of the 1.25 million workers PSC was designed to reach.

(The 300,000-member American Federation of Government Employees has also become alarmed. Raymond L. Gray, director of its Fair Practices Department, has asked to see the film and has been told by the union's national executive vice president to open a campaign to save the program.)

In November 1971, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights published a "One Year Later" report on federal agency civil rights compliance. It lamented that little progress had been made in removing barriers to equal opportunity. This, the report associated in some cases with "a blind, unthinking fidelity to the *status quo*; in others, a calculated determination to do nothing. . . ." The commission, in its own hiring and upgrading practices, was found as guilty as other agencies.

The commission also shared in the blame for the failures of other operating agencies, the Civil Rights Commission urging it to "exert more aggressive leadership." Specifically, the report said, "It must substantially augment its efforts as coordinator of the government's equal employment opportunity effort by undertaking new initiatives in the area of personnel management."

That is precisely what the Civil Service Commission, the government's employment office, failed to do with Plan D, even as the civil rights report was being published. As far as the Civil Service Commission is concerned, executive training is high on its list of priorities, but job and skill training and upward mobility for the minimally skilled is now off the list entirely. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

'What God Abandoned, They Defended'

BLACK LIST, SECTION H. *By Francis Stuart. Preface and postscript by Harry T. Moore. Southern Illinois University Press. 416 pp. $10.*

DAVID H. GREENE
Mr. Greene is head of the All-University Department of English at New York University.

To the reader who is unfamiliar with the work of Francis Stuart, *Black List, Section H* will appear to be a novel which utilizes actual people and actual events in telling the life story of an Irish writer who, on the eve of World War II, left his family, his country and a developing literary career for Berlin, where he joined the war against the Western democracies by doing German propaganda broadcasts like William Joyce, the famous Lord Haw Haw. Unlike William Joyce, who was also an Irishman and whose motives for committing the treason for which he was eventually hanged were at best purely political, the hero of *Black List, Section H* has a motive which is nonpolitical, has nothing to do with humanity in general, and relates only to his own artistic destiny. In brief, he does what he knows is likely to destroy him because it is the only way in which he can become the kind of artist he wishes to be and feels he has the capacity to become. Unlike Lord Haw Haw, the hero of *Black List, Section H* does not make the mistake of renouncing his Irish citizenship, and thus by virtue of his neutral status, plus the good fortune of falling into the hands of the French military, he can at least hope to escape Lord Haw Haw's fate or Ezra Pound's.

Essentially, then, this is a novel which attempts not so much to tell a sensational story as expound a sensational theory about the individual destiny of the artist. Like Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice," which the hero of Mr. Stuart's novel cites because it presents his case clearly, *Black List, Section H* lays bare the perversity, the drive toward self-destruction and dishonor which is presented as the artist's heritage. Simply by following his destiny as an artist, Mann's hero is degraded into becoming an aged homosexual, pursuing a small boy in plague-infested Venice until death mercifully intervenes. Stuart's hero ends in a different kind of hell in which he is either to be judged a war criminal or, as the novel's title indicates, blacklisted for the rest of his days.

This is the novel's main statement, and out of it comes the puzzle which the book presents. For *Black List, Section H* is about real people and real events—W. B. Yeats, Maud Gonne, Liam O'Flaherty and Dublin of the 1920s and 1930s. And the hero, although he is given the fictitious name of Luke Ruark, and is referred to most of the time simply as H, has an obvious relationship to Stuart himself since the facts of his life appear to duplicate many of those in Stuart's life. Like Stuart he is married to Iseut Gonne, the illegitimate daughter of Maud Gonne, the Irish Joan of Arc, celebrated in many of Yeats's poems. H has two children whose names are identical with those of Stuart's two children. Like Stuart, H accepts a post as lecturer at the university in Berlin and spends the entire war in Germany. H's literary career—though clearly not the novels he writes—closely resembles Stuart's: first a volume of poems, an award from the Royal Irish Academy, then a series of novels.

But if *Black List, Section H* is an *apologia pro vita sua* it is not a very attractive one, and it does not adhere as closely to reality as might appear. Nobody has ever confused "Death in Venice"—which Mann once said he wrote while on his honeymoon—with his autobiography. It is a fiction which attempts to explore philosophically a theme related to the artist's temperament and his role in society. But Stuart has so obviously modeled his hero on the facts of his own life that one finds it difficult to believe that he is theorizing about the artist in society and not trying to explain his own conduct.

The hero of *Black List, Section H* tells us that his first novel was inspired by an incident during the Anglo-Irish war of 1918-21 in which two young girls who had consorted with British soldiers were shaved and chained to a fence outside a Catholic Church where their humiliation could be witnessed by the whole community. The two girls "symbolized for H the poet who is exposed and condemned for his refusal to endorse the closed judgments and accept the categorical divisions into right and wrong that prevailed." He concedes that the girls "probably acted from selfish greed, or perhaps just sex, but at least that prevented them from being absorbed into the soul-deadening community of the righteous, and losing their power to grow inwardly either in guilt or innocence." So the girls figure in H's first novel, appropriately entitled *I Won't Be Wearing Shamrock on St. Patrick's Day,* where their conduct is defended.

When a London actress, with whom H is having an affair, asks him if he is a Fascist, his answer is that the only side to take is "the one considered unpardonable by the circle" in which he finds himself. When an English friend reproaches him for accepting the offer from Germany, "It was hard to explain that his first responsibility, though he wouldn't have chosen the word, was not toward the victims of organized injustice, who had more effective champions, but, as he'd tried to explain in his novel about the girls tied to the railings, in defense of the indefensible and in questioning the unquestionable." In Germany when he gives his readings in 1939, he realizes that he will be "distinguished not by acclaim but by the brand of dishonor." In Berlin he sees "broken and barricaded windows in a street which by now he knew had been a Jewish business quarter," but he explains his cooperation with the Nazi persecutors as a "reaction against the mores of home," and takes consolation from the thought that his ultimate condemnation will not "arouse any sympathy."

When he returns to Germany to accept a regular university lectureship, in January of 1940, the war has been on for four months and he knows that his action is now irreversible. When he agrees to write, and then to broadcast, anti-English radio talks for the German Government, he knows that he is "turning from the busy street to slink with thieves and petty criminals down dim alleys, leaving the lawful company to which he'd belonged to become, in its eyes, a traitor." A British military prisoner of war tells him, "Oh, I know that as an Irishman they're not your enemy technically. But aren't they proving themselves the enemy of mankind, I mean of those very human and irrational attitudes and the freedom of thought that you're so committed to in your novels." H's defense is that "it's here in the company of the guilty that with my peculiar and, if you like, flawed imagination, I belong. The situation I've in-

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volved myself in, however disastrous for my reputation, and perhaps because it *is* disastrous, gives me a chance of becoming the only sort of writer it's in my power to be."

So neither H's actions nor the statement which the novel makes has anything really to do with politics or war but with the conviction that the artist must ignore the world's injustice and take whatever course of action will result in the achievement of his own destiny as an artist. And this is only possible in the company of the guilty and the damned and in the face of disapproval by the rest of his society. Mann's aging homosexual witnesses with horror and revulsion his own rapid descent into the depths of immorality and self-destruction, but Stuart's hero not only survives—his ultimate fate is, to be sure, unsettled at the end of the book—but never wavers in his conviction that he has done what was inevitable. And he gives nobody the right to judge him, for "the artist's guilt or innocence could never be strictly determined, not by himself and certainly not by those in authority. Perhaps the quality of his work was the only real test of the state of a writer's psyche." (One is reminded of Auden's pronouncement that time would forgive Yeats and Paul Claudel because they wrote well.)

This brings us back to the question of whether *Black List, Section H* is fiction or autobiography. The reader who is familiar with an earlier work of Stuart's entitled *Things to Live For: Notes for an Autobiography* (1935) can only feel that if H bears a striking surface similarity to Stuart he is nevertheless essentially a fiction. The central figure of the earlier volume is an intensely spiritual man, devoted to the mystics and saints of the Christian church, particularly the women saints like Bernadette of Lourdes, Thérèse of Lisieux and Catherine of Siena whom he admires because they burned with a white hot flame of religious passion and because they stand for an erotic as well as spiritual affirmation of life. This portrait, incidentally, is documented by W. B. Yeats who complained in one of his books that Stuart was "silent unless one brings the conversation round to St. John of the Cross or a kindred theme." But the hero of the later book is no such man. When *he* reads the literature of the mystics, the saints and the hermits, the attraction they hold for him is quite different. In *Things to Live For,* which is a work of romantic affirmation, Stuart felt "an ecstasy of happiness working in the hospital at Lourdes," kissed the stone slab where Bernadette had knelt, and accepted the story of the apparitions as "true with all their import." The hero of *Black List, Section H,* on the other hand, is fascinated by Lourdes because it offers the possibility of a "pure, near-manic clarity that accompanies states of possession experienced by poets, mystics, and madmen." For him the visit to Lourdes is not an act of faith and self-sublimation but "the song of the hidden psyche."

One other example may be sufficient to show how it is impossible, for me at least, to believe that H is a self-portrait: Stuart, like H, joined the Republican Army during the Irish Civil War of 1922-23, was captured by government forces, spent many months in an internment camp where he went on a hunger strike, and was eventually released along with other Republican internees. Describing these experiences twelve years later, Stuart wrote, in *Things to Live For,* that he fought for Ireland and endured months of imprisonment because he was "fired by the strange joy of patriotism." "I have lain in bed, in prison, on hunger-strike, and seen the cause for which I had fought broken and defeated and believed myself defeated too." But the hero of *Black List, Section H* welcomes the civil war not because it is for a just cause but because it "created doubt and confusion, and thus a climate in which the poet could breathe more easily." To him, the true revolutionaries were not those who fought for Republican Ireland but those "whose aim had less to do with Irish independence than in casting doubt on traditional values and judgment." One wonders how many such "true revolutionaries" could have been found in a movement so firmly rooted, as Irish Republicanism was, in tradition.

No, *Black List, Section H,* is not really the story of Stuart's life. One need only read some of his finest novels—*Pigeon Irish* (1932), *Glory* (1933), *Redemption* (1947) and *The Pillar of Cloud* (1948)—with their passionate commitment to the Christian ethic of love, self-sacrifice and charity to realize that the self-centered egotist who moves through the pages of *Black List* preaching "Dishonor is what becomes the poet," and believing that the Hitlerian horror is a welcome purge to a complacent society, is not Francis Stuart. Whatever reasons Stuart had for his staying in wartime Berlin—and to my knowledge he has not revealed them—one who respects and admires him for his novels, which are unique in our time, cannot believe that they were those which inspire the hero of *Black List.* One can only wonder why, at this stage in his career, he has chosen to place the life of this fictional egomaniac so clearly and so recognizably in the paths he himself has walked. In Ireland, where some of the principal characters of the story are still living and where some of its revelations will provoke violent reactions, *Black List, Section H* is bound to be taken as some kind of perverse confession, or defiance, on Stuart's part. Many people who disapprove of him, for reasons made all too clear in *Black List,* will accept the book on the terms Stuart seems to have taken pains to propose, and derive some gratification from his self-immolation. Others, however, who know him to be an artist who has maintained his integrity and his ideals undiminished through years of neglect and even privation, will wonder why, at this late stage, he was unable to resist whatever compulsion drove him to write this scarcely credible narrative. □

The Story of the Man Who Fell Out of a Tree

WILLIAM SAROYAN

Mr. Saroyan's latest book is Places Where I've Done Time *(Praeger).*

Aspadour Bashmanian was a big man with a big head in which, it was said, there was a small brain.

All the same, he lingered in the streets of Fresno until he was almost a hundred years old. He ate and drank heartily, married four times, had four kids by each of his wives, told stories, listened to stories, and laughed.

He earned a living as an unskilled laborer, but he took only seasonal work, so that most of the time he was free to stroll about town, looking at the people in the streets, or going to the Court House Park to sit on a bench under a tree.

He frequently laughed when he was alone, and this encouraged people to imagine he wasn't right in the head. He was a distant relative of my mother's, so now and then he came to our house on O Street, generally with apricots or figs from his trees, or vegetables from his garden—parsley, green onions, mint, bell peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, squash or okra.

One afternoon in November he brought a bag of pomegranates. I asked him to

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please sit down, surely somebody else would be home soon, in the meantime I could bring him a glass of sour cabbage juice.

He drank the cabbage juice with relish, rolled a cigarette, lighted it, and said, "Well, now, my boy, tell me a story. I love to hear about the adventures of people."

"I haven't had an adventure yet," I said.

"Tell me about *that*, then," he said. "I enjoy listening."

I said, "I get up early in the morning, I go to school, I hate school, after school I run to town and sell papers, I like to sell papers, sometimes I make a dollar but most of the time I make half a dollar, I come home, I eat, I read, I go to bed, I sleep, and then I get up early in the morning again. That's all."

"What adventures!" he said. "Everything you do is an adventure." He laughed silently, as if he were alone.

"May I ask a question?" I said.

"Of course."

"Why do you laugh?"

"Ah," he said. "*That* question. Well, I'm a happy man. That's why I laugh."

"Other people are also happy," I said, "but they don't laugh. There must be a special reason."

"Well, you're quite right," he said. "There *is* a special reason. In Bitlis when I was your age—10 or 11—I fell out of a great tree which I loved to climb. I fell on my back. I was so badly hurt I went to sleep, and I thought I was dead. When I regained my mind I didn't know how much time had gone by, but I thought it must be a very long time. My mind came and went, it didn't stay with me, and this troubled me. My whole body ached, in a way that I can't even tell about. I remembered what I had been before I fell out of the tree and what I had become because of the fall, and I said to myself that if I could ever again be as I had been before the fall I would be happy every minute of the rest of my life. I was flat on my back a whole year, and then at last I was well again. That's why I laugh."

And again he laughed.

At that moment my mother came home, and the old man said, "Sh."

This pleased me so much that I laughed. □

Helping Indians Help Themselves

AMERICAN INDIANS AND FEDERAL AID. *By Alan L. Sorkin. The Brookings Institution. 231 pp. $7.50.*

PHILIP RENO

Mr. Reno is economist for Navajo Community College. He is the author of a number of articles and reports on Indian economic questions.

If 1970 was indeed "The Year of the Indian," this book makes it clear that the slogan was not justified by Indian material well-being or by economic development nourished by federal aid. The current optimism in Indian affairs stems, in my opinion, from the rising Indian resolution to exercise responsibility for Indian destinies. This spirit, and the practical factors embodied in it, are forcing the issue in federal programs for Indians, but unfortunately these are touched only indirectly by the purposes of Alan Sorkin's study.

Those purposes are "to describe and evaluate those programs [for Indian reservation economic development and to aid Indians relocating from reservations] and to identify their strengths and weaknesses. It concludes with an estimate of the additional funds needed to make the federal effort more effective." The question is, of course, what does "more effective" mean? How much more effective? More effective to what end?

Sorkin has pretty carefully limited his evaluations to the question of "how much more effective," and his criteria are for the most part the general goals of the different programs he reviews—more education, better health, industrial development, etc. Adequacy of funds is of course a matter of critical importance for Indian programs, and Sorkin's study concludes that for "more effective" programs, about double the amount of money that is now forthcoming is needed.

Admitting the importance of funding, however, the question of the objective of federal programs has always been the heart of the matter. During the 1920s Indians and their friends mounted an offensive on federal handling of Indian affairs, including an assault on the goal of forced Indian integration in white society. The challenge was successful, and in the 1930s the federal goal was changed to one of "helping Indians help themselves." The corollary of this goal was self-determination through strengthening the political and economic capability of Indian tribes and Indian communities.

The momentum of self-determination was stalled by the war in the 1940s, and by politics in the 1950s. Now the movement has built up a new head of steam, and federal policy at the top has shifted to make this the official view. This new—or renewed—federal commitment might reasonably imply a program for economic development, necessitating an inventory of Indian economies, a formulation of program goals, and an evaluation of alternative investment programs for reaching these goals.

Sorkin points out that socioeconomic data needed for effective program design are not available. He recommends that a staff of professional economists be added to the staff of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to prepare reservation economic studies, somewhat along the line of the "reservation profiles" which Herbert Striner and others have recommended.

The BIA obviously needs an economics staff, but Sorkin's specific recommendation either ignores or begs the question of helping Indians help themselves. Economists doing this kind of study should be assigned to and work for the Indian tribes requesting their help. The BIA itself cannot bring about development; either the Indians will decide or nothing will happen.

The difference that a deliberate focus on Indian self-determination would make in Sorkin's recommendations is illustrated by his treatment of agriculture, industrial development and manpower. These three areas are basic, and the lagging Indian economies naturally reflect lagging accomplishment in programs affecting these areas.

Before white men arrived in America, many Indians were skilled farmers, and thereafter Indian skills with horses, cattle and sheep were demonstrated in often

WHALE SONG

The pitch was lowered, slowed, decoded.

THE WORLD IS WIDE, were the words we heard,
MY SHE-LEVIATHAN BEAUTIFUL . . .

PLEASE . . . LITTLE FISH THAT WALK . . .
PLEASE . . . LITTLE FISH THAT WALK . . .

PLEASE . . .

Francis Maguire

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disconcerting ways. Nevertheless, white men's programs for Indians in agriculture have often failed, and Sorkin recommends that "extensive surveys be conducted to determine whether there is enough Indian interest in agriculture to merit large expenditures."

The basic problem with this recommendation is that there is no possibility for economic development of many Indian communities *without* concurrent development of Indian agriculture. How could the relatively many Indians now making a subsistence living in agriculture and stock raising transfer to industries and services? They are the least schooled of Indians. More of them than most persons would think speak little or no English, and a good many who speak English cannot read or write; their skills relate to the land and to the care of animals. And yet it is no wonder that Indian young people express little desire for agricultural life, considering the kind that has been offered them.

Indian people are still more closely tied to the land and more concerned with plants and animals than any other Americans. Offer them appealing alternatives —in technically adequate agriculture, soil conservation, forestry and stock raising. And for heaven's sake do not take a survey until these alternatives have been made clear in practical experience. When this has been done, no survey will be needed.

A statistic Sorkin mentions, and a related fact he does not mention concerning agriculture illustrate the weaknesses of federal manpower programs and of Sorkin's evaluation of the major such program. The statistic is the number of agricultural extension agents in Indian areas. This number is only about 200, far less than the needed number. The statistic that is not given is the number of these 200 extension agents who are Indian. This figure is almost a nothing set —about one out of seventy in Arizona, for example, although one-fourth of Arizona land is Indian land.

The same thing is true of teachers. Only a handful of the teachers of Indian children are Indian. When I used to see John Collier during the 1950s he would talk in detail and with feeling about BIA programs initiated in the 1930s to recruit and educate Indian teachers. Manpower programs after John Collier left the BIA were generally not geared to economic development but rather to relocation. Even though the relocation program has been successful, and Sorkin concludes that it has, it does not necessarily follow that more scarce training funds should be allocated to it. A different kind of study is needed to determine whether other programs might not be still more productive—skill centers on or near reservations, for example, or demonstration farms for agricultural training.

A word about Indian industrial development. BIA emphasis has been on the location of footloose industry in Indian areas. Perhaps the bitter jibe by critics of the program, "Hong Kong industries," is unfair, but the point (the appeal of low wages) obviously has some validity. The crucial point, however, is that an industrial development program should be part of a total economic development program. Such a program should be designed, not simply or even primarily to attract footloose industry but with the basic aim of developing productivity of Indian natural and human resources. In this connection it should be noted that Indian development may be frustrated simply because there is little left to develop. Lack of protection of Indian water resources in particular may become a national shame.

Much more could be said—in fact is being said in Indian forums—about Indian resources and about Indian development. The general relation of this thinking to Sorkin's study is that the latter helps clarify the need for further, specific studies and, by indirection, the way to go about making them. The essence of all this is, again, the aim of helping Indians to help themselves. □

Portrait of the Artist as a Dirty Old Man

VERLAINE. *By Joanna Richardson. Illustrated. The Viking Press. 432 pp. $10.*

VIVIAN MERCIER

Mr. Mercier teaches English and comparative literature at the University of Colorado. His latest book is The New Novel: From Queneau to Pinget *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux).*

Paul-Marie Verlaine was James Joyce's favorite French poet: he translated him, he learned him by heart, and he imitated him as best he could in the poems of *Chamber Music.* It is probable that he was still imitating Verlaine in *Finnegans Wake,* trying to capture the onomatopoeia of *"Les sanglots longs/ Des violons/ De l'automne . . . ,"* which he had translated rather feebly in his youth, or that of *"Il pleure dans mon coeur/ Comme il pleut sur la ville . . . ,"* in which, Joyce said, "one could hear the very sound of the rain." Two other familiar Verlaine poems that Joyce knew by heart were *"La lune blanche / Luit dans les bois . . ."* and *"Spleen" ("Les roses étaient toutes rouges, / Et les lierres étaient tout noirs . . ."*); of the latter he said, "That is perfection. . . . No more beautiful poem has ever been made."

My friend David Hayman has written a two-volume work in French about the influence of Mallarmé on Joyce; nevertheless, almost everything Joyce knew of Mallarmé could have come from one secondhand source, Arthur Symon's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature.* Joyce could also have read about Mallarmé in another book he happened to own, *Les*

Antonio GRAMSCI
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Poètes maudits—by Verlaine. Let's face it, Verlaine is much easier reading than Mallarmé for an anglophone: that is why Joyce read and enjoyed Verlaine more. (T. S. Eliot too, perhaps: he quoted the famous last line from Verlaine's *Parsifal* sonnet near the end of *The Waste Land*: *"Et, ô ces voix d'enfants chantant dans la coupole!"*) Even today, when Mallarmé is the more admired poet among his fellow Frenchmen, Verlaine is undoubtedly the one more often read.

Joanna Richardson says little about Verlaine's influence toward Modernism in British and American literature. When she remarks that "As a poet, he had done service to modern literature," it turns out that she is referring primarily to French literature: Verlaine "had deliberately broken every rule of [French] prosody" —an easy thing to do, since the rules had by then become so arbitrary. He had also, scandalous fellow that he was, "introduced foreign words, and vulgarisms"—though on nothing like the scale of his contemporary Tristan Corbière. Finally, he "understood the art of mystery and suggestion . . . ," not in itself a particularly modern achievement, one would think. It was George Moore who put his finger on what seemed to his generation the extreme of Modernism in Verlaine's early poetry, its amorality: "Gautier sang to his antique lyre praise of the flesh and contempt of the soul; Baudelaire on a mediaeval organ chaunted [*sic*] his unbelief in goodness and truth and his hatred of life. But Verlaine advances one step further: hate to him is as commonplace as love, unfaith as vulgar as faith." (This ceases to be true with *Sagesse* and some of the volumes that follow it.)

Miss Richardson describes her book as "the first full-scale critical biography" of Verlaine, but literary criticism is hardly her strong point. I don't see that she adds much to the standard view of Verlaine's poetry, which is that his best books were *Fêtes galantes* (1869) and *Romances sans paroles* (1874), and that he wrote hardly anything worth while after *Parallèlement* (1889). Certainly his poems of the 1890s have little to do with the poetry of suggestion and mystery. But if the name of Villon can be invoked, as it often is, to justify some of Verlaine's more simplistic religious poems—the Villon work usually cited as *"Ballade pour prier Notre-Dame,"* with its refrain, "In this faith I wish to live and die"—why can't Villon also be conjured up to justify *Chansons pour elle* (1891) and *Odes en son honneur* (1893)? Villon's *"Ballade de la grosse Margot,"* with its refrain, "In this brothel where we ply our trade," is the love song of a pimp for a whore and thus no more edifying than the earthy poems Verlaine wrote in praise of his two ex-whores, Esther and Eugénie. These love lyrics of a dirty old man have a directness that Yeats, even in his "wild old wicked man" days, might well have envied. In a poem that begins, *"Et maintenant, aux Fesses!"* ("And now for the Buttocks!"), Verlaine writes of the "cantata / That my soul and prostate . . ./ Will sing in praise / Of her dear Arse that the angel/ (Fallen, alas!) would salute / And then adore. . . ." One can hardly expect Miss Richardson to go into ecstasies over this, but it comes home to men's business and bosoms.

Critical or not, her book is certainly a full-scale biography. We do learn pretty well everything that is now known about Verlaine's deeds and misdeeds. The last 120 pages might advantageously have been pruned to 80 or 90, however. Miss Richardson has fallen into the trap that Constantine Fitzgibbon avoided in his life of Dylan Thomas. Every poetaster who ever bought a drink for Thomas or Verlaine felt it his duty to record the occasion for posterity in deathly prose—but it is no part of a biographer's duty to quote them all, especially when they all say the same thing or, rather, *one* of the same two things: either "Because I have a great soul, I saw the great soul shining out of his bloodshot, half-closed eyes," or "Why couldn't such a great poet be a nice, well-behaved chap like me?" At the risk of sounding the second of these two notes, I must say that for long periods in his life Verlaine was a plain louse, and at times a sanctimonious one. Miss Richardson keeps reminding us that Verlaine's young wife, Mathilde, was dull, pretentious, half-educated, and probably sexually unresponsive. True, no doubt, but even dull, pretentious, etc. people have rights and—more important —sensibilities that can be tortured and crushed. Mathilde, some of whose behavior to Verlaine Miss Richardson describes as cruel, showed Verlaine a good deal more sympathy in her book about him than Miss Richardson shows *her*.

If Mathilde was a reliable witness, this is the sort of thing she had to endure, at the age of 19, from her 29-year-old husband, who was then in love with the poet Arthur Rimbaud: "One day, in mid-January [1872], he came in when dinner was nearly over. Mathilde was unwell, and staying in her room. Verlaine went upstairs to find her sitting by the fire, holding the baby. He demanded money so that he could go out and have some coffee. Mathilde replied that he did not need to find an excuse to go out: he left her more alone every day. Verlaine was exasperated. He seized his son (then three months old) and flung him against the wall." The child wasn't hurt, fortunately, but then Verlaine started to choke his wife until her cries brought her parents to the rescue. Such forthright behavior might be easier to condone if Verlaine had not followed it up with poems in which he forgave Mathilde the wrongs she had done him.

The poet also took a knife to his mother on more than one occasion when in need of money. Eventually, he spent all of the unlucky woman's considerable fortune, squandering much of it on his two great passions, Rimbaud and another young man—this one without the saving grace of genius—Lucien Létinois. It should not be supposed that Verlaine's parents did not love him and were harsh with him; on the contrary, they doted on him, and their error, if they made one, lay in being overindulgent. In later years, though he drank as much as ever, Verlaine became much less violent and seems eventually to have given up homosexuality altogether. He used to beat up the old girls he lived with from time to time, but then they used to beat him up too.

With uncharacteristic wit, Mathilde said of her husband, "He spent one half of his life doing wrong and the other half repenting it." Some find it harder to forgive Verlaine for his repentance than for his sins. Because he later relapsed into drunkenness, buggery and fornication, critics often feel that *Sagesse* (1880), in which he proclaims his penitence and return to the Catholic faith, must be a hypocritical masquerade. Miss Richardson denies that he was a hypocrite but, in a sudden outburst of provincialism, says that the best work in *Sagesse* "lacks the conviction of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, which Verlaine admired. . . ." The Anglican hymnal used here as a touchstone is an anthology of work by many authors of widely varying degrees of merit, while "conviction" is a quality notoriously hard to measure. Without raising the question of sincerity, I would venture to assert that the sonnet sequence *"Mon Dieu m'a dit . . . ,"* in which the repentant Verlaine carries on a dialogue with God, can stand beside any European religious poem written since the 17th century, without suffering disgrace. I doubt if it is fair to say, as Miss Richardson does, that "the most successful poems [in *Sagesse*] were the poems of mood"—that is, those without religious overtones and similar to the early poems that Joyce admired—though these may indeed have the most immediate appeal for a 20th-century reader.

Much more suspect than *Sagesse* are the twenty-five poems devoted to the memory of Lucien Létinois in *Amour*. As Miss Richardson says, at the beginning of the series "one finds Tartuffe as-

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serting the purity and virtue of a relationship which was, at best, ambiguous." The fifth poem contains a line of incredible smugness as well as of a prosiness unmatched elsewhere in Verlaine, whose sheer mastery of technique can often transmute the banal into the *recherché*: *"J'étais, je ne puis dire mieux, vraiment très bien,"* which might be freely translated as "I was pretty good, if I do say so myself"! But Verlaine's attempt to sanctify the relationship soon breaks down, and in the sixteenth poem he cries out that he ought not to have adopted Lucien as his son: "That adoption was the forbidden fruit; / I ought to have passed by in the scent and the cool shade / Of the tree and the fruit without stopping nearby. / Heaven has punished me . . . I ought to have, I ought!" The eighteenth poem ends with one of Verlaine's great, echoing wails: *"Mon pauvre enfant, ta voix dans le bois de Boulogne!"* where the internal rhyme of *voix* with *bois* becomes a moan of anguish. On the other hand, *"Laeti et errabundi,"* the elegy on Rimbaud inspired by a report of his death, expresses pride and joy in their former relationship, rather than bewailing sin and loss.

Ever since the beginning of the Romantic movement, readers and critics have insisted that poets must be sincere but have failed to devise foolproof objective criteria for sincerity. In spite of the New Critics, who showed that every attempt to measure sincerity was guilty of the "intentional fallacy," Miss Richardson is still trying to decide which poems of Verlaine are sincere and which not. Verlaine once stated that *"il faut être absolument soi-même"* ("one must be absolutely oneself"), but this does not preclude having different selves at different epochs of one's life or even at different hours of the day. As Verlaine said to a critic of *Sagesse*—which was followed, we must not forget, by other volumes of religious poetry—"Why treat as an eccentricity the publication of poems which translate my present state of mind with all possible honesty?" "Honesty" raises the same problems as "sincerity," but note the phrase "present state of mind." Verlaine wrote good poems when in many different and even conflicting states of mind; so did Yeats, for example, and nobody holds it against him. I would no more have enjoyed meeting Verlaine than George Moore did, but we should all be grateful to any poet who enlarges the scope of our sensitivity. On the other hand, it is pointless to claim that Verlaine's own very real sufferings, as well as those of his family and friends, are the price that must necessarily be paid for such gifts. Verlaine wrote some of his best-known poems before he ever met Rimbaud. As for Mallarmé, he enriched our sensibility in a kindred way without ever deviating far from an ultra-bourgeois manner of life. □

All Fiction Is Feigning

DOCTOR BRODIE'S REPORT. *By Jorge Luis Borges. Translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni. E. P. Dutton & Co. 128 pp. $5.95.*

RONALD CHRIST
Mr. Christ, author of The Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Allusion *(New York University Press) and editor of* Review '71, *teaches English at Livingston College, Rutgers University.*

". . . I wanted people to understand that I was not quite the fool I was being admired for." That's how Borges commented on "Rosendo's Tale" in the previous volume of this Dutton edition of his works, and he might well have introduced this current collection by saying he is not quite the fool he is going to be condemned for. Because, have no doubts, he's in for it. These stories are not the Borges that reviewers have been praising, writers imitating and readers, in increasing numbers, enjoying. No mirrors here, hardly an erudite reference and, exactly, none of that a-*maze*-ment which *is* Borges to most of us. Instead, there are eleven "straightforward stories," to use Borges' own phrase, that abandon "the surprise inherent in a baroque style as well as the surprises that lead to an unforeseen ending."

"Revisionist," then, best describes Borges' approach in these stories which in fact surprise by not surprising at all; and "Rosendo's Tale," which is reprinted in *Doctor Brodie's Report,* is most explicitly and illuminatingly revisionist of all. However, you have to know a little of the background in order to understand how: Borges' early story, "Streetcorner Man," was written, as he tells us, in a "stagey" and "operatic" way that sought to invent patterns and strange symmetries, but it was immediately read as a realistic account of hoodlum behavior in Buenos Aires and subsequently turned into a classic of Argentine anthologies. Consequently Borges invented those now famous tales where you can't mistake his melodramatic staginess, his arias of erudition, at the service of schematic fantasy. Still, even in these universally accepted stories he is misunderstood—although certainly not taken for a fool. His visceral confusion is mistaken for the resultant, pellucid aestheticism; his fundamental melancholy is seen as analytic disinterestedness and his Pirandellian pathos as Shavian ice. The reason is that readers do not accept the elaborate systems of time and personality that inform his works as being valuable, to Borges, precisely because he doesn't believe in them—he says so unambiguously in "New Refutation of Time"—just as the unapprehended artifices of "Streetcorner Man" were a venturesome refuge from a boring sordidness, from fear of aggressive physical action, from fear itself. Now, more than thirty years after "Streetcorner Man," in writing "Rosendo's Tale" Borges squarely faces this misunderstanding and the reality on which it is based, by abjuring former flights and retelling his early story of one rough's killing another from a different point of view so that invention dissipates into "a deliberate surmise as to how events might actually have happened." Artifice is redressed here by probability. In the course of that revision, stylistic, psychological and narrative, Borges confronts the provincial, the petty and the stupidly cruel—exactly that world he avoids in his great fiction —at the same moment that he attempts to understand the nature of his own

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experience not from the heights of his former metaphysic but from an unintellectually contemplative, reluctantly lyrical point of view. In other words, Borges goes back to the sources of his inspiration—the mean mundane—and begins again, this time forswearing labyrinthian ways. Thus, while "Rosendo's Tale" acknowledges revision of one story, *Doctor Brodie's Report* is the tacit revision of an entire career: the points of departure are identical, but Borges' recent mode of presentation is radically different.

And disappointing, because one miracle in Borges was his ability to present an understanding—an encompassing version or vision—of the universe in a nutshell. Now Borges forgoes that *a priori* understanding; he abandons his magic ability to pull slight, wayward events and thoughts into a predetermined mold. Instead, he sets down plots he seems to think will speak, finally, for themselves in such a way that he, we, will understand. So in these stories the narrative is almost nakedly stated and then, in place of a socko metaphysical finish, Borges proffers a meek questioning of what those events mean. Having renounced his offices of fabricator, diviner, seer and, in St. Paul's sense of the word, *fool* for fantasy, Borges puts on, once again, the attitude of perplexed, saddened child—an attitude running through his best work but now almost the only perceptible current in his fiction. Formerly the emperor who bewitched his people with illusionary garments, Borges is now the incredulous boy who sees only naked truth. (The moral of that story, of course, is that children just don't have the transcendental, transforming power of imagination that creative adults do.)

Accordingly, in "The Meeting" we learn how a boy witnessed ritualized slaughter that he later came to suspect was an encounter of famous knives rather than of unimportant men. Significantly, the story ends not with a declarative, O. Henry wrap-up but with a mournfully meditative question, one so frail it cannot even assert its interrogative character: "Things last longer than people; who knows whether these knives will meet again, who knows whether the story ends here." Or, in "The Elder Lady" we read a flat, almost stale narrative about the last descendant of a virtually unacknowledged hero of Argentine history, a woman who has decayed into virtual catatonia; and the story ends, not with some dizzying denominator but again with elegiac meditation: "I think back on the dead soldiers of Big Hill; I think of the nameless men of America and of Spain who met their deaths under the hooves of horses; I think that the last victim of that throng of lances high on a Peruvian tableland was, more than a century later, a very old lady." Or, in "Guayaquil," which exhibits two historians who may be incarnations of famous generals, Borges' narrator writes: "My opening paragraph, I suspect, was prompted by the unconscious need to infuse a note of pathos into a slightly painful and trivial episode. I shall with all probity recount what happened and this may enable me to understand it."

Of course all the stories in *Doctor Brodie's Report* do not explicitly fulfill this form of bare narrative as meditation or speculation, and in some cases Borges has gone so far that the meditation is invisible; but Borges does explain in his "Afterword" that to him "the writing of a story has more of discovery about it than of deliberate invention"—the boy in the tale of the emperor's clothes again—which brings us back to his repeated definition of the aesthetic as something we are about to understand but never quite do.

So, then, we can indeed understand what it is Borges is up to, even understand *why* he is up to it; but that understanding, I think, is not adequate compensation for the reading of his book. Even acknowledging Borges' admission in "An Autobiographical Essay"—"I suppose my best work is over . . . yet I do not feel I have written myself out"—you will suspect you are watching Borges write himself out in *Doctor Brodie's Report*. The best stories here—"The Intruder," "The Meeting," "The Elder Lady"—are dim lusters, while the others are merely "slightly painful and trivial episodes" or, worse still, apparently vacant narratives like the title story which blankly redacts Borges' earlier "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," as well as Swift's still earlier travels of Gulliver. Understanding, explanation are *not* justification, no matter how hard psychiatrists, politicians and critics try to make us think they are. And while we can appreciate the personal value of Borges' latest revising gesture, we cannot say that it makes for great or even, in some instances, for good literature.

And yet, and yet (as Borges, as Lytton Strachey have taught us to consider) I can esteem Borges' courage in writing the disappointing reality which is, in fact, the basis for those valued flights from it, and I prize all the more what he escaped *to*, having seen what he escaped *from*. I can even admire the quality of satisfaction and ease with which he presents that reality. But, yet again, I am disturbed by the symbol of that old woman in "The Elder Lady,"

TALKING TO THE SKY

Until this day, his eyes had the tender and thoughtless blue of the sky. Now they looked like, and at, sky running with grey fingers, fumbling past the shabby coin of light.

A bee big as a thumb buzzed, a blood-colored bird flew up the hill, a bell sounded out its iron tremor (if it could speak would it summon God not man?), the white hearts of the grass were about to depart from the ground—he stood and spoke to the sky.

"Gigantic meat-safe—angels going by in ones and twos . . . past that bloody, oversized comma, cut out of her golden body gone grey—wings a little too white and new!"

Up, up from her little brown house bulging on the hill stuttered smoke; wincing and blowing away like his sentence.

"I did not know, how strong you are —" Then the grey opening a metal yellow flower (whose fiery particles outlive each thing and moment, offering power?) like her eyes when she told him it had been done.

No child. Never even got to be the bubblehead and body mapped by veins floating in her hunched prayerfully, waiting (to unvoice the reeling darkness of chance?) to cry in the nothing of air.

"I am real. I am I. I hate you. She—" *He saw her desperate in a garden somewhere (where?) with a child, carrying a cat cradled in a shoe-box coffin, stomach open, maimed, meteorlike eyes —(interested in something?) (Why is it he thought of a hawk batting down from the monstrous, inappropriate height of sky in lost fierce pride?)*

Rain fell—slapping like flesh on flesh, stopped. Scared away (by what kind hand brought alive to a strange place?) a shimmering, yellow-green lizard.

Up—up—from the ground came the head—hair slowly waving like the grass in wind—a mortal shine (insane, compassionate smile?) on its face.

Thinking of God, he tamed his face. Then it turned into a stone.

"Years, years— "*he cried out to the stone.*

Then it was gone.

Darker and darker grew the valley, more and more forgetting. The bright growth day died.

Wordlessly he spoke her, wordlessly. Till sound cried and failed near stars, as tall trees pointed like instruments at a white membrane of moon.

Raphael Rudnik

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whom Borges describes as having lost her sight, lost her hearing, lost her responsiveness to food and to people—and then sums up by saying: "She was, in short, happy." I am disturbed especially because I remember how Borges, admitting that his best work is over, wrote: "I no longer regard happiness as unattainable; once, long ago, I did."

Borges may have been misunderstood—I may be misunderstanding right now—but as his narratives shrink in on themselves, as he *seems* to forget that the root meaning of fiction is *to feign*, his farewell gestures invite less and less of my response. Borges, of course, is no fool, but I yearn for those stories wherein he fooled me; and I am not entirely convinced that my grief is private when I close *Doctor Brodie's Report* with a lament that echoes Lear's in some small way: "My poor fool is dead." □

The Only Ground for Dignity

WE CAN'T BREATHE. *By Ronald Fair. Harper & Row. 216 pp. $6.95.*

JERRY H. BRYANT

Mr. Bryant is the author of The Open Decision: The Contemporary American Novel and Its Intellectual Background *(Free Press). He is at present working on a study of fiction written by black American authors since World War II.*

Ronald Fair is one of those American writers who keep producing fine work and getting little recognition. I associate him with writers like Wright Morris, Nelson Algren and Warren Miller, who have enjoyed considerable critical praise but have failed ever to win the profitable attention of the establishment. They occupy that place in American literature most writers would avoid if at all possible: being described as good but minor writers.

Fair is a careful and controlled craftsman. His novels are short, simply and clearly written, and move with speed from one good scene to the next. *We Can't Breathe*, his fourth novel, is no exception. It is a moving, cleanly written autobiographical novel about a young black growing up in the slums of Chicago during the thirties and forties.

It can be linked with other novels of the same genre—nostalgic novels of city childhood, like Elliott Baker's *The Penny Wars*, Jerome Charyn's *Once Upon a Droshky*, Herbert Gold's *Therefore Be Bold*. It opens with zoom shots of 7-year-old Ernie—the narrator-protagonist—and his gang roaming the streets scavenging, killing rats, smashing wine bottles, finding games in the filth. Full of excitement and energy, they are totally unaware that they live a deprived existence. In the glow of aftersight, Ernie views that existence with a muted pleasure: "I think, as I look back now on those years, that the warmest feeling of my childhood, there in that strange city that I still call home, surely must have been the coolness of sitting inside an ice truck on a hot summer day. . . ."

Fair's Ernie captures the gentle reminiscent tone of a man ambiguously satisfied with the scenes of his past. He amuses us with a gallery of unusual people. A young boy with a false eye constantly and deliberately loses it to upset his nervous mother. A successful Jewish grocer, with stores all over Chicago, works in his State Street store because he prefers black customers to white—indeed, wishes he were black. A fatherless youngster waddles after his friends joyfully calling their fathers "Daddy!" until he is virtually adopted by every father on the block. And a life-loving black man successfully fools the bigoted welfare clerks out of two checks a month until the weather gets so cold that he can no longer change his disguise down by Lake Michigan.

The gang that Ernie leads during his pre-teen years takes part in adventures that remind us of the naughty exuberance of the Dead End Kids—the movie version. They steal from well-stocked, white-owned stores outside their neighborhood. They fight with older neighborhood kids and win. In one especially gratifying foray, one of their number gets caught when he remains behind to admonish a white clerk for calling him "nigger." He fast-talks his way out of danger by pretending to be the only supporter of a sick baby sister, and ends up with more loot than he could ever have stolen and $3 to boot.

But the rosy glow of nostalgia is not the dominant tone of *We Can't Breathe*. Ronald Fair is black, has lived the life he writes about. The creators of the movie-version Dead End Kids were able to avoid any suggestion that the poverty in which the youngsters lived was anything but a lark, in which the engaging toughies continually outsmarted authority and the underworld alike, actually enjoyed huddling around their trash-can fires, and in the end virtuously chose the morality of the dominant affluent society. Fair's honesty and experience prohibit him from any such debasement of reality. Ernie discovers early that he is a "nigger" and that this means he is permanently at a disadvantage in a vicious world. The adults of his race possess no power at all and can offer him no protection. They are relegated to inferior jobs, or they become lushes and are beaten by capricious cops, or they are killed by careless white civilians who are never punished or forced to make restitution.

With authority so distant and wielded by members of a strange race, Ernie and his companions adopt the only code that will allow them to survive in their jungle. They carry knives and they use them. They employ violence with their own kind because they are frightened not to. They instinctively blunt their sensibilities because too much feeling and too much compassion make them dangerously vulnerable. Sex is something about which they are not long naive. All about them is the overwhelming evidence that they are members of an inferior caste unprotected by the law.

Fair finds no new outrages, produces no new atrocities. But *We Can't Breathe* does not strike the reader as being more of the same, as a repetition of *Native Son* or *Knock on Any Door* or *Manchild in the Promised Land*. For one thing, Fair is too good a writer. Though the experiences he fictionalizes in this novel resemble the experiences of many other blacks who have written about them, his own response is unique and individual; the forms in which he casts his experi-

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ences reflect that uniqueness. They remind us of a reality of which we must never lose sight, comprised of an almost limitless store of examples of inhumanity.

But the most important story Fair tells is not of oppression and degradation but of the saving of Ernie's humanity. He becomes a writer, not a published one but a real one. Through his writing he acquires the ability to give shape to his experience, develops a sense of purpose, frees himself from the sealed vessel of his frustrations. Without this outlet, he would surely have ended up with a needle in his arm or a bullet in his head. With it, he plumbs the soul of his people, becomes their Everyman. He grieves for them, and his stories are sacred embodiments of that grief. The high school teacher who opened up his life gave him the means for honoring and preserving their sanctity: "Never lie. You must always tell the whole truth." The truth Fair tells is wrapped in love. Not the sentimental kind that must soften the reality but the kind that finds in truth the only ground for dignity.

Somehow, Ernie becomes a writer. Somehow, from the unpromising confusion of poverty, from the frustrations that lead inevitably to violence, from the atmosphere of dope and degradation and drunks lying in the gutter, Ernie emerges as a self-conscious being, not only surviving but keeping "some of my humanity intact." That is the really awesome mystery of the black man in America, and *We Can't Breathe* is one more valuable testament of that mystery. □

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Yakima

"Commentary" is a Yakima, Wash., organization which exists for the sole purpose of producing one-minute mini-editorials for local radio. Since February 1971, it has been producing five such messages a week.

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The idea for the program began with Gene Rupel, a Yakima schoolteacher who thought that liberals were making a mistake by not making use of radio time to educate and persuade. What little political comment local stations carried came for the most part from right-wing political and religious-political groups; it was free and the stations were glad to use it as filler. Though a few people were interested in the idea, most thought it sounded too difficult to organize or could not believe that as many people listened to radio as Rupel claimed.

Then a popular local station, KMWX, began broadcasting the syndicated comments of Al Capp, the right-wing cartoonist, during prime radio time, and local liberals discovered that they, too, listened to radio, especially when driving to and from work.

Mauno Saari, a Yakima Valley College mathematics and science teacher, and Pat Haas, a housewife with a talent for working with people, began studying Federal Communications Commission guidelines with an eye to securing free air time from local stations. They quickly discovered that station licenses were due for renewal in February 1972. The FCC, they read, includes among its guidelines a provision that stations must offer the opportunity for local self-expression. This was exactly what they prepared to supply.

Saari and Mrs. Haas sent out a mailing to about 200 names, proposing that Commentary be organized to sponsor radio messages. The response to the mailing was enthusiastic, and in January 1971, Commentary began operations. By February the group had convinced the KMWX management to put Commentary on the air, and the station began broadcasting the mini-editorials three times each weekday in prime time.

The group has gradually developed an efficient and democratic production procedure. Mrs. Haas serves as coordinator; an editorial board with a regularly changing membership edits copy, checks length, and makes typed copies. Approximately 100 people have been actively involved in the production of the broadcasts during the first year, and new recruits offer their help each month. The editorials are written anonymously and are recorded by members of the group whose voices project well on the air. KMWX makes taped copies for two other stations, Radio KUTI and KYVE-TV, the local educational television channel, which have since begun to carry the material.

Even though it is impossible to measure the effects of Commentary in the community, Mrs. Haas says, "We know lots of people are talking about it. We think that Commentary has caused discussion of important issues, some of which might not have been raised at all without us. The most satisfying part of this project to me, however, is the large number of people who have been involved and their enthusiasm about the program. I call people to ask if they will serve on the editorial board, and they always say yes." Saari thinks that the Yakima plan, with local variations, could be copied by volunteers elsewhere. □

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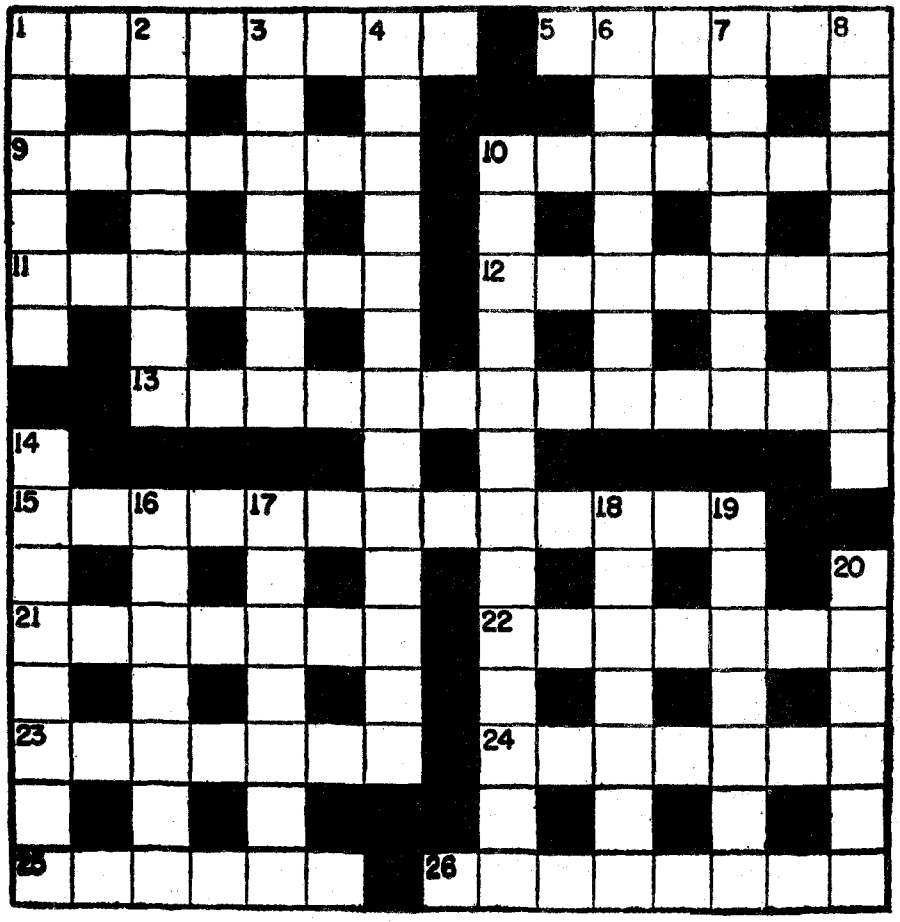
Crossword Puzzle No. 1430

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 In general it's true of an epitaph, or is most likely to be. (8)
5 Proving a high-class fur can be of some value. (6)
9 Moses, at fault, however, is still chief. (7)
10 A little child doesn't tell the truth about it, though it's just a figure of speech. (7)
11 A famous craftsman of instruments turning in here? (7)
12 Nothing in the trees but channels! (7)
13 Sounds like a workman's indifference is tricky! (7,2,4)
15 But rained in so badly as to become almost unmanageable? (13)
21 Perhaps with an inner conflict, as they say now, and certainly not downright sober! (7)
22 Certainly not a ladyfish, though carefully bred. (7)
23 Meanly constructed, only big! (7)
24 About that rental paper—it's free! (7)
25 Money might be held in it. (6)
26 Hypothetical force, alternatively, not so much as this, when the scent is lost. (8)

DOWN

1 Not quite so tangled as lace from a certain region. (6)
2 Causes one to eat this singular pie? (7)
3 Peter is somewhat shaken, but there's some temporary relief. (7)
4 An attractive photographer's model should be in rather good shape. (7,6)
6 Starts to find out what happens when the picture goes blank? (4,3)
7 Djakarta used to be a club that has a Latin way with it. (7)
8 Oriental district in New York. (4,4)
10 Stayed around to break up the fight inside, so possibly capable of 13. (5-8)
14 Proving a statuette is very good to roll one carpet up inside. (8)
16 Acts in a diabolic way. (7)
17 It might worry one if the insect has a frightening sound. (7)
18 The yearly sort right at the bottom is ring-like. (7)
19 Look at what a little angel Eva tends to be, put in high spirits! (7)
20 Oars might be, with two to tool. (6)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1429

ACROSS: 1 Beside oneself; 4 Ambition; 11 Nettled; 12 Baits; 13, 16, 19 and 28 Refrigerator; 14 Style; 15 Anger; 17 Gadgetry; 21 Slightly; 23 At sea; 26 Amass; 29 Hyena; 30 In-house; 31 Almanac; 32 Modified; 33 Chorea. DOWN: 1 Browbeat; 2 Seeking; 3 Dyers; 5 and 20 Man of La Mancha; 6 Ictus; 7 Inlayer; 8 Nodded; 9 Affright; 18 Daydream; 22 Loathed; 24 Sterner; 25 Radium; 27 Stuff; 28 Theme, 29 Humph.

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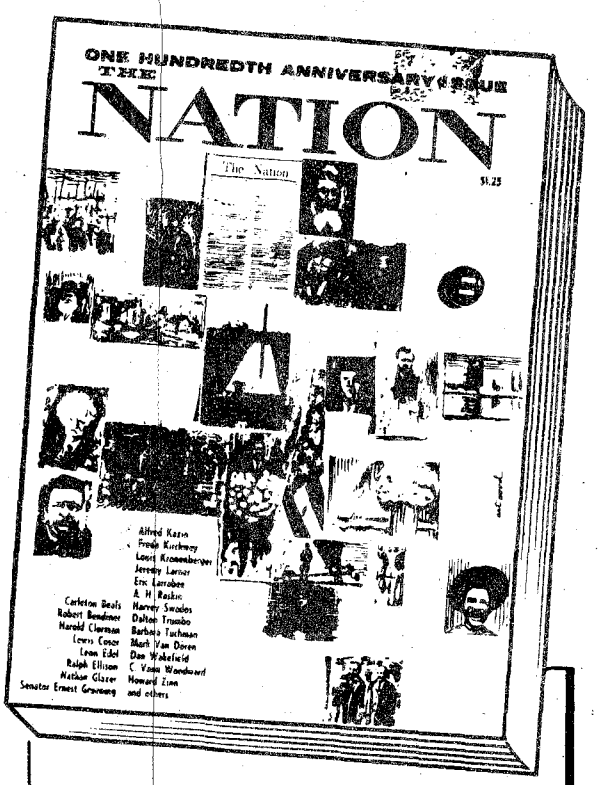

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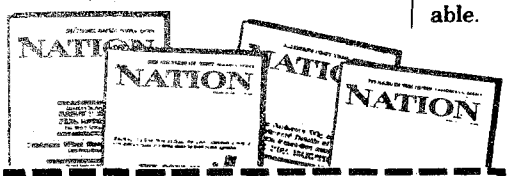

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